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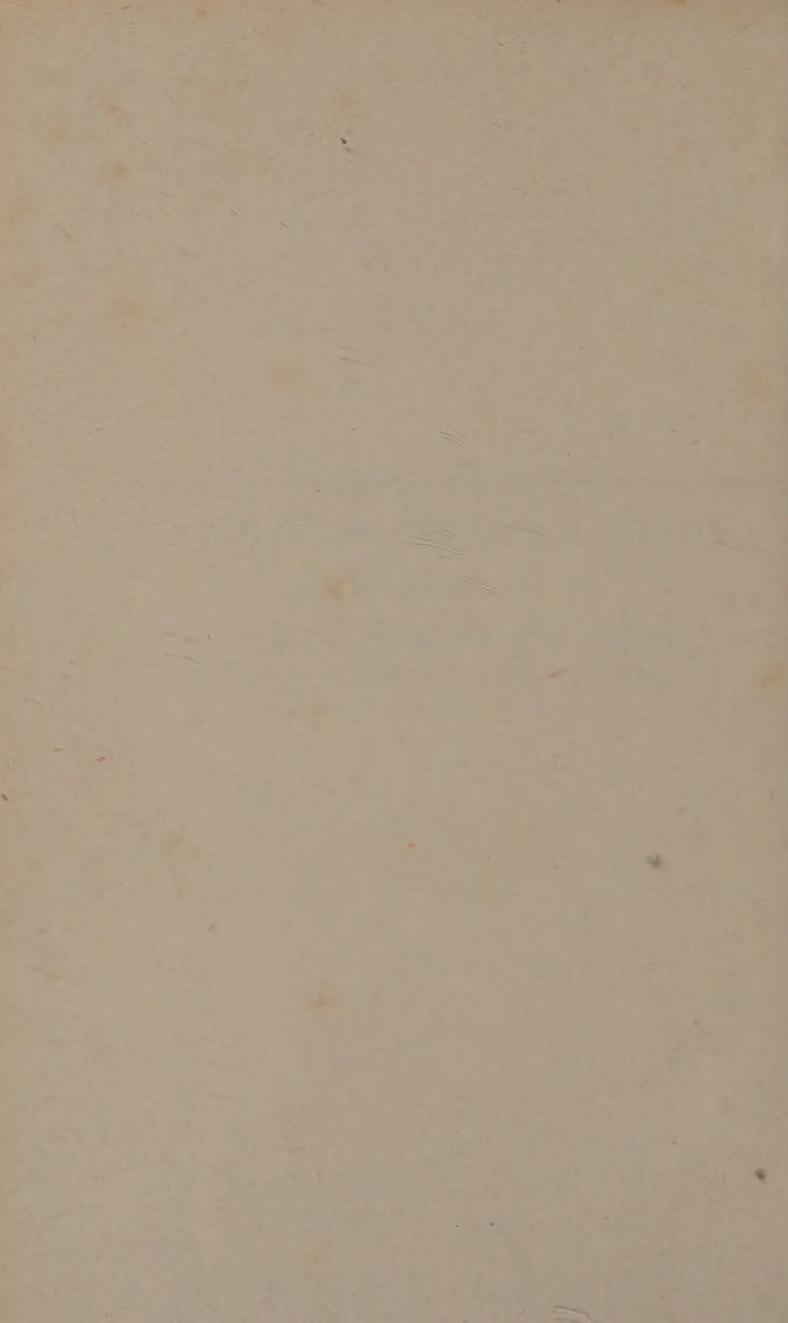
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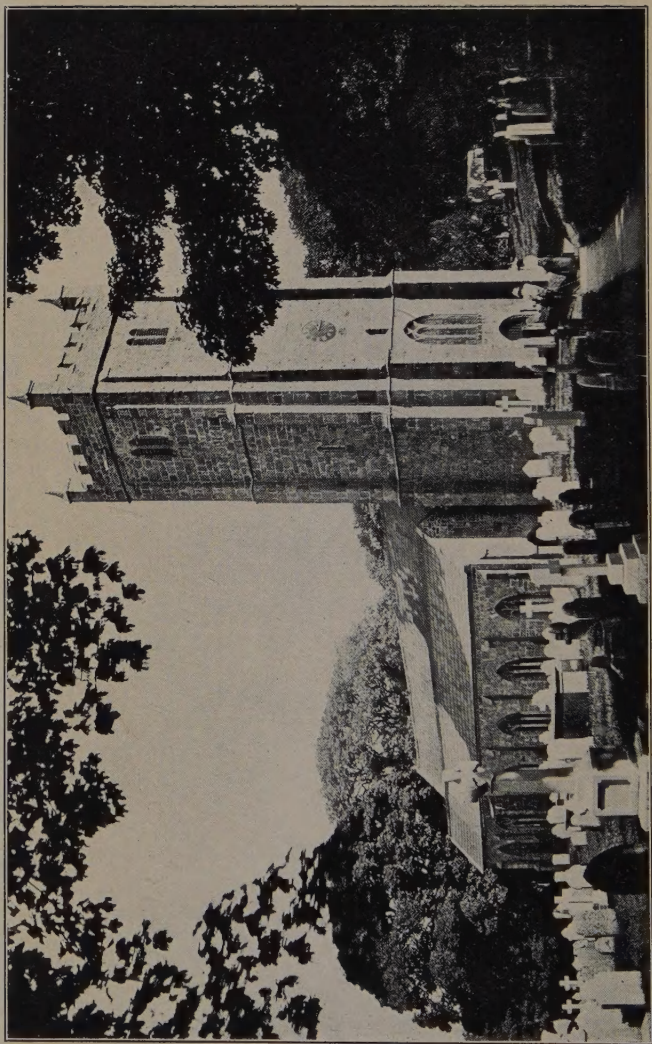
SOME DARTMOOR SAINTS  
AND SHRINES

STUDIES IN EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION  
AMONG THE HOMELY FOLK

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CHAGFORD CHURCH, DARTMOOR

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# Some Dartmoor Saints and Shrines

STUDIES IN EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION  
AMONG THE HOMELY FOLK

BY

LEWIS H. COURT

*Author of "The Romance of a Country Circuit"  
"The Bane of Britain" "These Hundred Years" etc.*

MORGAN & SCOTT L<sup>TD</sup>.

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TO THE COMPANION IN LIFE TO WHOM I  
OWE MOST OF ALL, AND WHOSE LOVING  
AND FAITHFUL SERVICE HAS MADE POSSIBLE  
TO ME SO MANY MINISTRIES THAT WOULD  
HAVE BEEN OTHERWISE BEYOND MY REACH—

MY WIFE

KIEFFER 12 57

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## P R E F A C E

I N the year 1923 I published under the title of *The Romance of a Country Circuit* a series of sketches of homely country folk whom I had known in my early years in the Exmoor district of Somerset, which work was so well received that I was led to set on record my impressions of some of the characters of Dartmoor with whom I had intimate fellowship for several years, and the memory of whose worth and work is still fragrant to me. From many parts of the world letters of appreciation were received, several from persons who had known the characters dealt with in *The Romance*; and it occurred to me that a similar treatment of some whom I had known in the Devonshire area may be of interest to my former readers, and others as well. I therefore planned a series of studies, some of which have appeared from time to time in various periodicals; and I hereby express my indebtedness to the editors of *The Christian*, *The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, and

the *United Methodist*, for their kind permission to incorporate them in this volume.

The persons of whom I write were not without such defects as are common to humanity. They had their limitations and their idiosyncrasies, and were mostly of the humbler walks of life ; but they were redeemed from the commonplace by the noble purpose which inspired them, and by their simple and sincere efforts to follow the Christ. That they were chiefly Methodists must not be taken as an indication of any sectarian prejudice on the part of the writer ; for he gladly admits that there were some of other Religious Orders among the moormen for whom he had great regard ; but, at the same time, he felt it wise to write only of those who were best known to him, and for whom he had some right to speak.

I regret that there are many others of honoured name whose record is not contained in these pages ; but such is the great Human Interest that not even the annals of a small community can all be contained in a single volume, and my hope is that the demand for this work may be such as will justify later the publication of another series of similar sketches.

I have felt, too, that with the passing of so many



things in this age of rapid transition, the types here dealt with are worthy of some permanent record ; and I can only hope that their example may stir in some hearts the desire for the things that are pure, lovely, and of good report ; and with that object in view I send them forth.

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LEWIS H. COURT.

EXETER,

*September 1927.*

“Called to be saints.”—I COR. i. 2.

“Wherever true-hearted men have fought the battle with sin and striven after a nobler life; wherever they have energized and prayed—be it a cathedral, a little wayside chapel, or a moorland solitude—there you have a spiritual shrine.”—ANON.

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**I**

**FARMER JOHN, A SAINT OF THE SOIL**



The saints know not that they are saints. They are the humblest of the humble. They shrink from self-display, and often their earthly opportunities seem to be few. They might even think they stand alone, with nothing better than a poor house in a poor village, and a chance of wiping some tears from some eyes. Their sweet odours may be quiet and still, till on some day of storm the flower-bells in God's garden are shaken and their fragrance flows forth. Then is known the faith that can live through any trial, and brave any death.

Oh! faces of the saints ; sweet and firm lips accustomed to name the name of God ; dear eyes which discern a brother in the poorest creature ; hairs blanched by meditation on eternity ; sacred colours of the soul, shining still in age and death—blessed are they who have seen you, more blessed they who understand and receive from your transfigured countenances, lessons of wisdom and immortality.

W. R. NICOLL.

## I

### FARMER JOHN, A SAINT OF THE SOIL

THERE comes to me, as I write, the vision of a great tract of moorland country, the like of which is not to be found in any other part of England ; though in some respects it is no doubt outclassed by the glorious moors of Bonnie Scotland. It is a land beautiful for situation, with a range of nearly forty miles of its own ; and it rises in grandeur above the pleasant pasture-lands and peaceful valleys of the fair county of Devon, as though some gem of the North had been transferred from its native setting and planted here among the gentler scenes of the South. It is a land of noble hills, undulating heath, and picturesque valleys ; of clear-singing rills and swift-flowing rivers ; of golden gorse and purple heather bloom ; of wind-swept solitudes and grey granite tors ; a land, too, of great silences, steeped in magic, romance, and mystery ; and it yields its secrets only to those who have been raised from its soil, or have become through long years of experience its adopted children.

For such as have any sense of communion with Nature, and are not afraid of the solitudes, " Darty-moor "—as the old natives call it—is a rare country all the year round. Every season has its appeal to the eye of the artist and the lover of Nature in

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## 4 Some Dartmoor Saints and Shrines

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the wild. Spring-time ! There is something ineffably sweet in the Spring-time mood of the moorland. In the lower reaches of its valleys, primroses and daffodils abound, and the boughs with their catkins are like cascades of silver and gold ; while higher up, the tall beechwood hedges are a glory of tender green. The fresh, sweet-scented herbage covers the hills and tempts the little shaggy ponies up from the more sheltered retreats.

In Summer, its upper reaches are ablaze with sunshine, and the long white roads that traverse the wilds are scarcely ever free from the hoot of the motor-horn and the sound of merry holiday-makers. But off the beaten tracks there are grand solitudes where the work-worn mind and body may find healing and rest. Nor is there in all England a haunt more charming and invigorating for such than the heart of the moor. Often, in its loneliest retreats, one comes upon the stray traveller or a picnic party, revelling in the lovely scenery and the life-giving air ; and the soft colouring of the herbage, stretching away over the billowy landscape to the skyline, is a sight for the gods.

But the Autumn ! Ah ! who can describe the splendours of the great Devonshire moorland in the Autumn ? The sheer riot of beauty in the rich bronze of the bracken-fern held in the sunlight, the purpureal masses of the myriads of heather-bells, the gorses aflame with gold, the soft, pearly skies of the early morning, and the overpowering pageantry of the sunsets on the silent ranges of the moor, which seems—like the rapt human observer—to be holding its breath at the gorgeous artistry

of the setting sun: how they baffle description! Such sights of loveliness have I seen there in those lonely haunts as have enriched my soul for ever; and their memory still quickens in me a spirit of devotion to the moor.

Nor is the Winter devoid of charm on Dartmoor; though few there be then to yield to the spell of it. The silver mists that hang about the flanks of the hills; the broad reaches of sober green, relieved here and there by the giant tors and the brown of the naked heather; and over all the distant hills, the thin blue haze, and the deeper blue of the Winter sky. And the Winter storms that sweep the moor, when every living thing must seek shelter, and the lightnings play about the tors; what a display of force and grandeur do they make; and how insignificant a creature man feels himself to be in the presence of those raging elements! Yet, he who does not know Dartmoor in the Winter cannot range all its beauty nor best appreciate its Summer glory.

Amid the splendours of this upland wild I spent some of the most wonderful years of my life. I moved freely in and out among the homely moorland folk; and being a moorman myself, from the Exmoor country not so far away, an advantage was mine in getting at the hearts of a somewhat reserved and clannish people. Now, after many years, memories remain to me of both the moorland and the inhabitants which, tested by time and a great variety of experiences in other parts, are shining and sacred still; and what has been to me so often an inspiration, I seek in these records to pass on to

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## 6 Some Dartmoor Saints and Shrines

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readers. Others have written much on Dartmoor. Some of our most celebrated modern writers have heard the strange, haunting call of these wilds, and have sojourned here to catch the local colouring for stories of the land and its people which have entranced innumerable readers. But, so far as I know, few have attempted to portray the class of moormen whom I have in mind, or the deeper soul that stirs there among these unobtrusive folk.

Dartmoor people live for the most part in the pans and glens of the moor, where they are protected from the violence of the storms that rage in the Winter. But the persistence of man has driven the task of cultivation far up the hillsides ; indeed, as far as he dares. And so, fringing the moor, the traveller sees the " newtakes," as they are called, large fields, fenced in with the broken granite that has been cleared away from the soil ; and below these, the simple cots of the moorland farmer. These small holdings have been wrested from the wild by the unremitting toil of perhaps four generations of workers ; and the scant harvests, with the short season for the gathering of them, make the visitor question whether the game is worth the candle. But life, and freedom, and a little bit of God's earth, are very sweet to these children of the wild ; and there are other than mercenary values where honest men are concerned : thus there are still those in the West Country who, as Masfield puts it :

" See the golden town, and choose,  
And think the wild too sweet to lose."



They would affirm with Borrow's gipsy: "Oh, but life is sweet, brother: and there is the wind upon the heath."

Below the newtakes there are the farms, the older farms, the farms with a history; and the ancient granite manor-houses that are associated with some of the most famous names in the annals of the West. These have their grazing-lands and their tillage, and their little coppices in the hollows. And this is Dartmoor, which takes its name from the river whose flow is so swift that it is called "the Dart." The lovely, incomparable Dart has here its fountain-head; and so, too, has the Taw, the Tavy, and the Teign; and many a lesser stream. A veritable mother of rivers is this moorland of the Dart, sending her exuberance of life and song into all the valleys round about.

There are few homesteads on the upper reaches of the moorland; but in the dips and more sheltered retreats are the little lone hamlets with their grey granite churches and clumps of sturdy trees; while lower down the clusters of houses assume more the character of the village, and are more in touch with the life of the lowlands and the main arteries of traffic.

A strong and hardy race are they who dwell among these hills, honest sons of toil, with something of the spirit of those broad and breezy moorlands wrought into the very fibre of their being. Suspicious of innovations they have ever been; and when Methodism first penetrated into these hamlets, nigh a hundred years ago, it met with but a cold reception, which soon gave way to a heated

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## 8 Some Dartmoor Saints and Shrines

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opposition, and no small persecution, as later chapters will show.

The early 'Bryanites, or followers of William O'Bryan, the Cornish Methodist evangelist, were the first to preach the Methodist doctrines in some of the more remote of the Dartmoor hamlets and villages ; and they found it hard to break up the fallow ground, and, harder still, to build up the little Churches which have now such an inspiring history of their own.

But there was one element in Methodism which finally won the moormen, and that was its mysticism. The wonderful experiences of which these fiery-hearted evangelists told the people of the moor found some echo in the indefinable instincts and yearnings of their own hearts. The ideas of a great Spirit speaking out of the silence—of a Voice, a Vision, a Controlling Will—were by no means foreign to their own native experiences of life, and their superstitious theories of the unseen world about them. Methodism laid hold of these and lifted them into a nobler light, making articulate to them those strange and deep emotions that had never before found adequate expression. So, at length, many of the moormen became Methodists ; and the Cause of Wesley found no more worthy adherents than those of the stalwart Dartmoor strain.

Farmer John, the first character of whom I write, was a good, typical, moorland Methodist. When first I met him, the snows of Winter had already gathered on his brow ; and he and his wife were living on their scant savings in a little cottage on



A CROMWELLIAN FARMHOUSE, THROWLEIGH



A DARTMOOR HEARTH



the farm which belonged to his younger brothers ; and when occasion required it, he would help them, as much as he was able to do, in the fields ; while on Sundays he would tramp miles across the country to fill the village pulpits. His own legs were nearly always his means of locomotion. The younger men could ride if they would ; and generally they did : but for him, walking was an attraction. As a young man, he had " run to hounds," as they say on the moor ; and few there were who could beat him at that game : and now that he had passed the age of threescore years and ten, he was still fleet of foot for an old man, and seemed to accomplish his journeys with comparative ease.

Everybody that was anybody knew Farmer John and respected him. Physically, he was a splendid specimen of the good old yeoman type for which his county has had such great repute. Tall and well-built, with a really fine head and striking features, he was a personality who immediately impressed the observer. There was that about him which would have made him a distinguished figure in any walk in life. He was indeed one of Nature's gentlemen, with a rare refinement, and an old world chivalry that marked him to the manner born. The high, ample forehead bore evidence that Nature had been generous with him in the matter of providing room for brains ; and the mental man that occupied that room—considering his limited advantages—was pretty much alive, and looked out of those windows of his on to the world of men and things, from his own angle. And wonderful windows they were,

those eyes of his, in the shadowed recesses of that finely arched brow, as clear and sparkling as the brook that flowed by his cottage door.

I have seen few finer faces in my day. It would have served as a model for a saint. Though it travelled on the shoulders of a homely Dartmoor farmer, it would have delighted the eye of a Morland, and Rembrandt would have revelled in its *chiaroscuro*. And behind the features there was a soul of many moods and swift transitions. Indeed, his change of moods often puzzled me. I could not always tell where the laughter ended and the tears began. The tragic and the comic lay so near each other in him, and the transition was so swift that it left one wondering at one's own slowness of wit. It was the quality which Francis Thompson so finely expresses in his "Daisy" poem :

"She left me marvelling why my soul  
Was sad that she was glad ;  
At all the sadness in the sweet,  
The sweetness in the sad."

The elements were so mixed in him that one sometimes got a little mixed in trying to follow him. With him there was always a little sadness in the sweet, and a little laughter in the tears. One felt that his was a spirit like an æolian harp, responsive to every wind that swept it, and to every gentlest change of the psychic atmosphere. He was, in fact, highly temperamental, sensitive to so much that is never dreamt of in the philosophy of the phlegmatic man. And there was poetry, too, in Farmer John's make-up ; not that he ever wrote poetry, but the soul of it was there. He knew little of



poetic forms—had read very little poetry other than that of the Authorized Version and the Methodist hymn-book—yet there were deeps of true poetic feeling in that fine spirit of his; and so I class Farmer John as one of those “mute inglorious Miltons” who move on through this wonderful pageantry of life and of Nature, conscious of its grandeur, responsive to its call, and yet so circumstanced that the music which is in them can find little range outside their own obscure lives. I comfort myself with the reflection that those mute poets, who could never here sing the surging deeps of song they felt and knew, will find their range in some future state; and I am confident that such fine graces and noble passions as I have found pent up in very lowly lives, must somewhere come into their own. It is to me one of the arguments for the immortality of the soul.

Farmer John possessed a magnetic personality, and was always the centre of interest in a company of his neighbours. His quaint humour and genial spirits won him many happy, and not a few strange, friendships. Conversation seldom flagged when Farmer John was about. His merry eyes and pawkish wit dispelled all dullness, and set the company on good terms with each other. I have known him turn the gloom of a November afternoon into Summer brightness by the play of his mirthful fancies. Such spirits are indeed invaluable! Half the friendships of life depend upon them; and without the medium they afford, many good people would never find their true point of contact with each other. The young men would

listen entranced as he recounted to them some of his early exploits with the hounds and incidents of interesting persons whom he had met. Nor was the magnetism of his personality felt only by those who were of his own persuasion. Often it won him a way into hearts that were dead set against what he stood for in religion and politics. His appeal was irresistible once he could get a hold on his hearers. And this quality stood him in good stead as another chapter will reveal. In Circuit gatherings, or at an auction sale, men of different types would gather about him and, metaphorically, warm their hands at his hearth-fire. He could get things done where the rest of us could hope for no response. There were those that did not like the "Methodies"; but they liked "Farmer John." Even the old clergyman of the parish had high regard for him, notwithstanding his dissenting proclivities; and together they would tell of the great times they had had in their early days at the chase.

Farmer John in his humour, it is impossible to render in cold print. There are no words that can convey the subtle changes of his countenance when his humour was on him, nor the quaintness of many a quip which came as natural to him as water is to the duck. It was the man *himself*, the whole man, that made the humour of the situation: the face lit up and eyes brimful of fun; and his droll sayings often bubbling with laughter. And that has gone with the man into the Great Silence, though the memory of it lives on in the hearts of those who had fellowship with him: yet too elusive to reproduce. Journeying one day to



Chagford, he took the short cut through the squire's park-lands, where trespassing was forbidden. He had gone more than half-way through when the squire came upon the scene and brusquely took Farmer John to task for the offence. "Now, John," said he, "you know well enough that you are trespassing. I've a good mind to make you go right back again." To which John replied in his own whimsical way, and with a mischievous twinkle in his eye, "Sorry, sir; but that wouldn't help much, would it? You see, sir, if I do go back—seeing as I be more than half-way through a'ready—I shall be trespassing on your land longer than if I be allowed to go on: so you might as well let me proceed, sir." The squire's face was a study as the offender opened his eyes wider than he was wont to do, and awaited the answer. Of course, the argument was irresistible. What else could the squire do in the circumstances? His stern manner subsided, and with a smile he replied, "Well then, go on, and get you off as soon as possible!" "Thank you, sir," said John, "and I wish you a very good morning." His ready wit had saved the situation for him, and a broad smile spread over his face.

One day I entered his brother's house with a bundle of magazines from the Connexional book-room under my arm, for the friends at the little Church at Providence. John was seated in the chimney corner, and, casting a roguish glance up at me, he said, "Good afternoon, sir; now what may you have brought to-day, sir? Is it litter, or literature? For it do seem to me that a lot ov

the stuff what they do zend out nowadays is nothing but a pa'cel ov litter ; and they may as well drop the last part of that there fine word that they do use, an' make it plain 'liter.' ” I at once agreed with him, and assured him that I thought I had brought with me good, sound matter for the folk to read. He turned his face from me and chuckled merrily. John could tell a good story and listen to one as well ; and I never knew what little prank he was going to play off on me ; but it was delightful to see how the old man enjoyed a bit of simple fun. He was speaking one day of the change of fashion in the matter of women's attire. There were changes which he strongly denounced, and wondered that the young fellows would have anything to do with some of the giddy maidens of a sort. “ But all the same,” he observed, “ there be some things that be sartingly better than they used to be. Take the hats, for instance ; why, when I went courting first, the maidens did wear those Veyck-toreyan bonnets, as they do call 'em, and they had termendous brims on the front ov 'em. Why, to get a kiss from your sweetheart was like going into a big waggon-shed to get out a little cart. Ah ! it took some doing, I can tell 'e.”

One morning Farmer John had been at work in his garden, and, pausing for a little rest, he was leaning on the gate and looking down the pleasant lane. A neighbour, passing by, hailed him with, “ Good morning, Farmer John, then you are doing a bit of gardening, I see.” “ Well n—o,” he replied, in his own droll manner, “ n—o, Willyum, if you must know, I—I be jeäst laining 'pon the

geat." How much time he spent in preparing posers for the preacher I am not able to say ; but I know that whenever I went that way, he was more than ready for me. He took a delight in setting his superintendent Minister questions about the Bible and theology, which were much more easily asked than answered ; and I loved to watch his grand old face and his beaming eyes when this mischief was upon him ; for it was all done with such good grace, such fine sense of humour and courtesy. His brothers had little of this whimsical vein : they were of a more ponderous order, and one of them was extremely sober, and a thinker of no mean ability. But John would sometimes upset their gravity and get them into a chuckle of laughter before they were aware of it : and I have a notion that they did not always readily forgive themselves for such lapses from the good form which, in their opinion, ought to characterize men of their age and experience.

But Farmer John was a saintly soul. His face wore a light and a beauty that came of spiritual communion. He had not come early into the Kingdom. His high spirits and love of amusement had kept him for many years from what, to his young eyes, seemed the sombre faith of his family. He had not tasted of those pure pleasures which spring from the soul dedicated to high ideals ; and it was only after many days that he came to see the Inner Light and the joy of Christian discipleship, though his old manner of life had never taken him far astray from the Father's home, for he had a gracious, praying mother, and a

refinement of nature of his own that restrained him. But when at last he came to see his own insufficiency, and what was the will of the Master concerning him, he was overwhelmed with a sense of the grace and goodness of God, and felt he could never do enough for the Lord Jesus. So, though rather late in life, he became a local preacher, and rejoiced to tell his neighbours and friends "how great things the Lord had done for him." Thenceforth, his experience was that of a changed man in a changed world. Everything was lit up for him with a celestial radiancy, and he was happy as the days were long. He would not have understood the subtle beauty of Masefield's setting of the new spiritual consciousness in his "Everlasting Mercy" poem. But the experience was his, all the same :

" O Christ, Who holds the open gate,  
O Christ, Who drives the furrow straight,  
O Christ, the plough ; O Christ, the laughter,  
Of holy white birds flying after,  
Lo, all my heart's field red and torn,  
And Thou wilt bring the young green corn,  
The young green corn divinely springing,  
The young green corn for ever singing ;  
And when the field is fresh and fair,  
Thy blessed feet shall glitter there."

Farmer John, having put his hand to the spiritual plough, never looked back. He had long sown the seed in the stiff-working soil out Hittisleigh way : he would now strive to sow the " good seed of the Kingdom " in the hearts of the men around him. From the village pulpits he told the story of the Cross, and of his own experience of saving and keeping grace. As he talked of these things in the

homely dialect of the moormen, his eyes would often brim with tears of gratitude. In the pulpit and by the wayside he bore his witness to the reality of the Christian faith, and with features that told of the inward joy which was his. He was not a gifted preacher, and he preferred the lowlier term "exhorter" to describe his holy vocation; but there was a quaintness of expression, a gift of imagination, an originality that sometimes made his services unique; and none could gainsay his sincerity; while his face was a benediction.

At times, his fancy would give a most practical—if purely imaginary—turn to the discourse: as when, preaching on the widow of Nain, he pictured her as waiting, waiting for her sailor son who had long been away at sea; and from whom one morning the postman had brought her a letter, informing her that he was on his way home: her joy at his arrival; and then the sorrow of the discovery that he was suffering from a deadly disease and had only come home to die: then the tender compassion of Jesus when He heard the story of her loss: and finally, an elaborate description of an Eastern funeral, and the conversation which took place between the Master and the mother as they went back to the feast which, from being one of mourning, had been turned into one of joy and gladness. All very wide of the historic bearing it may be; but the unsophisticated mind of the moormen loves the story form of truth, as did the simple fisher-folk of Galilee. And after all, Farmer John was among his own folk.

I loved to see him in the little sanctuary at Pro-

vidence ; for he was a good listener, and his face was ever an inspiration to the preacher. He loved the House of God, and he loved the Methodist communion ; and one of the latest things he did when he knew he was nearing the end of the journey, was to call his Minister to his bedside, and inform him that he desired to leave part of his savings to the little Chapel in the village of his boyhood, and part to liquidate the debt on the Circuit manse. An accident in the hayfield, from which he never wholly recovered, laid him aside for many months ; and the dear partner of his joys and sorrows was taken from his side : but through all the shadows that gathered about him in the closing days, his radiant faith in God gloriously sustained him ; and when at last the Angel Death came for him, he was ready for the great transition and passed triumphant into the World of Light. His dust we laid to rest in the Providence Cemetery beside that of his dear one, and many another who had helped to make the history of the moorland Methodist Circuit.

“ Souls such as thine no bonds of death may bind :

They are so vital, so alert, intense.

And though the fair Immortals wooed thee hence,  
We know thou wilt some ampler mission find ;

That loftier themes will exercise thy mind

While we are held bereft, in blind suspense

Upon our earth-bound plane ; lacking the sense  
To grasp thy larger freedoms, or the kind  
And gracious purpose which so often lies

Concealed in Death. To thee all now is light.

Thy rest well won, thou hast obtained the prize

In those clear realms beyond our mortal sight.

I seem to see the shining trumpeters stand

And sound thee welcome to their deathless land.”

**I I**

**THE STORY OF PROVIDENCE CHAPEL**



## I

A little wayside chapel with white walls,  
And homely gables shy, among the trees :  
Few lines are here the artist eye to please ;  
And yet, for me, a fadeless splendour falls  
Upon its plainness, and my heart enthralls.  
All redolent of hallowed memories  
It is for me. What golden days were these  
Which, musing here, the pensive mind recalls !  
The old calm faces smile from out the years,  
That lit my childhood with a light Divine.  
I hear the voices hushed so long ago ;  
The hymns they sang, with rapture all aglow,  
Their rambling tunes, their prayers made oft with tears :  
These are the glory of this homely shrine.

## II

Far have I journeyed since those days and wide,  
And seen the world-famed temples, proud, ornate—  
Saint Peter's dome, soaring in splendid state  
Above the Eternal City ; Giotto's pride—  
His lily-tower in Florence ; and beside  
The Adriatic wave, standing elate,  
San Marco ; Pisa's beauty consummate ;  
And through grand portals Rome's bright pageants glide.  
Yet, with mine eyes upon the simpler ways  
Of that first Church of Apostolic time,  
What wonder if, for all the impassioned love  
Of Beauty born in me, I must approve  
The plainer orders and spontaneous praise  
Which here, for me, preserve the Church's prime.

L. H. C.



## II

### THE STORY OF PROVIDENCE CHAPEL

A WAY in one of the most picturesque haunts of the Dartmoor country, on a hill overlooking a romantic valley watered by the river Teign, stands a neat little Chapel which can be seen for miles around, and is indeed like a city that cannot be hid. The whitewashed walls, with their simple Gothic windows, peep out from the grove of tall trees that embowers them, and form a familiar object of the landscape. For well-nigh a hundred years that little sanctuary has stood four square to all the winds that blow : and the winds do blow on Dartmoor—and could those plain walls tell their tale, a truly wonderful tale they would have to tell. Seen from the north, over a wide range of farmlands that slope to the distant hills, it at once attracts the eye and affords the relief of a sense of homeliness in a somewhat solitary landscape.

For some years the Chapel was a centre of interest in my life, and the picture of it is indelibly stamped on my memory. I have carried that picture with me into strange lands and through half of my working life ; and always it has been to me a source of inspiration. That landscape I was accustomed to see in the years gone by, in all the lights and shades of the wonderful Dartmoor country, and in

every mood of the wild moorland weather. But never had it seemed more beautiful to me than when, recently, I revisited it after many years' absence, and in the light of a radiant morning in late Autumn. The tall beech-wood hedgerows so characteristic of the belt of cultivated land that encircles the moor were a glory of russet gold seen in the slant rays of the sun ; and from the rain of the early morning, were decked with myriad drops that sparkled like diamonds as I moved along them. The farmlands in the foreground were still a silver green, save where the plough-team had turned up the dark loam for the sowing of the Winter corn ; and some cattle were yet abroad in the fields. The clear waters were gushing over their granite sand-beds, and here and there, they caught a golden sun-glint or the deep blue of the sky. In the distance, to the right, rose the smooth, rounded form of Cawsand Beacon—a majestic mass, clear outlined against an almost sapphire vault of sky, whose deep hue was accentuated by the few white clouds that drifted away in the West. From Cawsand, with its well-nigh two thousand feet elevation, the undulating range stretches south-east to the rugged mass of Kestor, which stands like some cyclopean castle on the skyline ; and thence on to the heights of Lustleigh, Blackaton, and Buckfastleigh. The moorland slopes were veiled in a tender blue haze which deepened here and there into purple, while a pearly grey rested on the far horizon. On account of the Autumn rains the trees had not shed their leaves to any great extent, and the yellow and bronze masses caught, and held, the sunlight, as

though they were aflame—which contrasted with the dark pines in the distance magnificently. It was indeed a sight for the gods, and I could not wonder that the ancient pagans found so much to worship in Nature.

Perhaps, too, it was the mood that made me so susceptible to the beauty, and the haunting solemnity of that splendid Autumnal pageantry. For as I traversed those old scenes, I knew that many a vacant chair, and many another grassy mound in God's acre, would mark most painfully for me the change that comes with the years. So the morning and my musings were in accord; and the office of memory was sacramental, wherein I had communion again with those who had passed on, and came to see spiritual meanings in the common objects that surrounded me. As I lifted my eyes to the hills, and saw the little Chapel, white-gleaming in the sun, I thought me of another shrine and city that inspired the sweetest of all the immortal lyrics—the Psalms of David. I recalled, too, those great words, "His foundation is in the holy mountains." My heart was too full for words. I paused there in the quiet moorland way, and bared my soul to the Infinite. The beauty of that wonderful Autumn morning ravished me; but over and above all the loveliness of form and colour and proportion, there shone for me the beauty of the consecrated lives of some to whom I had ministered there in days gone by, and of the simple homes that were temples of sweet human service and divine peace.

For here dwelt, and toiled, and prayed, some of

the finest souls I have ever known. Simple-hearted saints in homespun they were, many of them, who worshipped in that unpretentious shrine, and who attributed all that was most divine in their lives to the influence of their beloved Providence Chapel. There they had learnt of the grace of God, had had their vision of heavenly things, and gathered confidence and quiet contentment amid the arduous toils which were theirs in those upland fields, and on the wide-ranging moor. Thither, for well-nigh a hundred years, masters and servants had found their way from their lonely homesteads to the house of spiritual communion and their only centre for social life. Some of those whom I knew were of the first generation of Dartmoor Methodists, and others were of the second. Among them were men with great awesome thoughts of God and of human destiny.

In their quiet haunts they had brooded much over the mystery of life and of death. The mystery of their own moorland solitudes was in their very blood. They were not without their superstitions, and were rather uncommunicative. The stranger could not easily establish contact with them. But my holy vocation gave me an advantage, and the years I spent among them revealed to me what amazing things may be found in simple, rustic souls who, far removed from the clangour of life's beaten ways, have been able to preserve some sense of their relationship to the Infinite. The Dunnings of Aysh, James Crocker and William Metters of Shilston, William Perryman and John Webber of Chagford; with honourable women, not a few—were souls



PROVIDENCE CHAPEL, THROWLEIGH

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of a noble seriousness who yet entered into the Master's joy of life and service ; and were among the excellent of the earth. There were types among them that would have answered well for Macaulay's noble tribute to the early Puritans, in his essay on Milton.

It is beautiful to see Nature in its own changing moods. But surely Nature is never so noble, nor so beautiful, as when she wears the reflection of consecrated human personalities. That is the reason why the old home scenes are always the most entrancing to us ; though they may be by no means the most beautiful in reality : only we see them with their added lustre of the old hopes, and loves, and associations ; for all these have entered into, and enhanced for us, the physical environment of our life. Wordsworth recognized this, and it made the sweetest of his lyrics. The flowers that have been watched lovingly of human eyes, the brooks that have sung by the hearths of men, the fields that have yielded to their strenuous toil, have in them a touch of splendour and significance which wild Nature cannot command. It is the human touch that makes Nature less awesome, and imparts to her the element of homeliness.

The story of Providence Chapel is one of a divine romance, and it takes us back to those days of the early Nineteenth Century when the Anglican Church in the West was destitute of spiritual life, and her Ministers in the rural districts, with few exceptions, had no due sense of the responsibility of the cure of souls. Especially in the Dartmoor country was this spiritual dearth then known : and as a result,

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the moral conditions were deplorable. Old men have told me of the disgraceful proceedings which characterized the parish revels or feasts of that period ; and the irony of it all was that the revel was generally held on the anniversary of the patron saint of the parish, or of the Church's dedication.

At these revels there were wrestling rings, and lewd displays, and various incitements to immorality ; and many a youth was there started on the way to ruin. The parish feasts of Throwleigh and Gidleigh were no exception to this rule. It was the shame of these carousings which weighed upon the soul of a young man of loftier mind, and one of the principal landowners of these parishes : so that he was in no little measure prepared for the earnest Evangel of the early Bible Christians who were then spreading their revival through the Western counties : and when these Methodist pioneers came to the moorland, they soon found in Richard Dunning Gay, the refined young yeoman, an eager inquirer after the Truth. Trained in the order of the Church of England, and belonging to a class by whom the Methodists were held in great aversion, it was no easy matter for him to break with the long tradition of his family, and throw in his lot with the people whom they so despised. But he was a youth of purpose who, once framing his resolve, went steadily forward, and was undeterred.

For some time, Mr. Gay watched the Methodists very closely, and concluded, from both their conduct and their teaching, that they were a people sent from God to quicken their neighbours to a sense of their spiritual needs : and then, much to the annoy-



ance of his own folk, he joined with them. Under their Ministry he soon found that inward witness of the Spirit which has ever been the distinctive mark of Methodism, and himself became an enthusiastic evangelist. At that time, he was still a junior in the eyes of the law, and his interests were in the hands of executors. His first desire was to provide a site, and build a sanctuary, for the Bible Christians, on his estate. This the executors did not at first sanction ; but, later, he had his way and Providence Chapel was the result. Soon after the building of the Chapel, Mr. Gay built a spacious residence for himself, close to the little sanctuary, so that the Ministers who came to preach there might have hospitality ; and this he called " Providence Place." He was an early advocate of popular education, and started in his own house a school for the youths of the neighbourhood : and I have been informed that it was he who suggested to the Methodist leaders in North Devon the idea of founding a proprietary school there, for the education of the sons of Free Churchmen, who found other schools closed to them. This scheme afterward developed into the well-known Shebbear College, the training-ground of so many West-country Ministers of later days.

Mr. Gay himself became an able and devoted Local Preacher, and trained other young men for the same holy office ; while Providence Chapel sent out an influence which soon transformed the neighbourhood and made the observance of the pernicious revels impossible. In that unpretentious sanctuary many a soul came to its second birth ; and the humble moormen saw many a vision of

God. It became a centre of spiritual light, mental education, and pure social intercourse—such as that lone upland hamlet had never before known. And as the years advanced, so the influence of the work there moved out in ever-widening circles, until it became literally true of it that, “Their lines have gone out into the ends of the earth.” To mention but a few examples: from the Providence Sunday School there went forth one who afterward filled the Presidential Chair of the Royal Institute of British Architects, another who discharged with conspicuous ability the duties of Mayoress to the great city of Brisbane, and yet another who became an efficient Circuit Minister. In many another English county, in the far colonies of the Empire, and in the American continent, there are still those who look back with tender and sacred memories to that plain hill-country Chapel as the hallowed shrine of their childhood. The Old Lights, many of whom I remember, have now all passed away; and it is difficult for the rising generation to picture them as they were. But to me they often come in imagination, and I can see the strong, calm faces of the men and the women who filed in through that embowered doorway, Sunday after Sunday, took their accustomed places, and worshipped the Lord their God with all reverence; finding here their inspiration for the faithful lives they lived and the witness they bore to the Truth that had made them free.

I can see the splendid, sturdy form of James Crocker, the meek man of God who—at eighty years of age—was still upright of body and mind, and

whose silver hair was indeed a crown of glory to a life of spiritual communion and service: and the three brothers Dunning, so varied in temperament, and yet so loyal in their devotion to the Cause—the oldest of them a man of large thought, who had grasp of big subjects, a student of divinity, and a devourer of all that rich fare which *The British Weekly* dealt out to its readers during the first twenty-five years of its existence. It was no small surprise to me to find in the quiet farmstead on the fringe of the lonely moor, a man who—although he had never travelled far from his native heath—had yet gathered such a wealth of information, and such insight into the larger interests of mankind. I see, too, the spare and feeble form of William Metters, the man who carried ever the joy of the Lord on his countenance, and passed down the leafy lanes praising the Lord; and with no trace of the many sorrows that had crossed his long track through the years. Old George Endacott, also, “bent two-double with the rheumatics,” toiling painfully down from his cottage on the moor to the Chapel; yet with an experience of grace that turned his poverty into abounding wealth.

There were many noble women who served the Cause of Providence Chapel. Conspicuous among them was Elizabeth Dunning, a gracious and charming soul, whose smile was a benediction, and whose hospitality was abounding. It is indeed a noble procession that moves before my mind as I write, and a splendid tribute to the quality of the work done in the Free Churches of the land, which—according to some—are but the uncovenanted

channels of Grace. Unpleasing to some eyes are those little village shrines in the West ; but I doubt not that the angels of God have often hovered about them, and a diviner consecration has been theirs than that which any ecclesiastical order has power to bestow ; for they have been the birthplace of many precious souls, and the scenes of many a Divine manifestation : and so we can afford to leave it at that.

#### A MOORLAND CAMPO SANTO

Come with me into the peaceful Providence cemetery ! It is a charming spot, with a beautiful Dartmoor setting. High up on the hillside, and close by the shrine it lies—an ideal resting-place for the dead. There are no marks of human pomp about it ; no vulgar display. It is just a tiny plot of the wild moorland, set apart for those of the last, long sleep. Above the narrow mounds, the stately pines, with their dark massy foliage, rise into the blue. All the year round the wind makes music in the branches, and the long shadows rest upon the graves as the sun sweeps 'round to the West. The high mossy banks in early Summer are adorned with the periwinkles' wreathèd blooms, and the grey granite stones in the hedgerows are tintured with lichens of many a hue. It is a haunt of silence and solitude, save for the music in the trees and the sound of distant waters, from where below a tributary of the Teign leaps over the boulders on its way down the vale. It reminds me of some of the tiny cemeteries I have seen away

in Alpine hamlets of high altitudes, or among the sweet Umbrian hills.

Let us look around on the graves—for they will have something to tell us of the romance of this quiet little garden of rest. Here beside us is the polished granite tomb of the founder, Richard Dunning Gay, to whom we have already made reference. It tells us that at thirty-nine years of age he fell on sleep. Not a long life ; but a very useful one ; and one to be measured by deeds and influence rather than by years. And that influence yet remains, and the work he established is still carried on by those who bear his name, though not of his branch ; for he died without issue. Here by the sanctuary which he built, and the school in which he taught, and in the ground which he gave, his dust awaits the resurrection of the just ; and the trees, that were but saplings when he died, now spread their sheltering boughs over the place of his rest.

Near by is the grave of the Reverend Thomas Brooks, one time President of the B.C. Conference, a native of Chatham, and one of the first converts of the Kentish Mission, which was a development of the great revival of 1815-1819 in the West of England. After ministering with great acceptance in various Circuits, he was appointed to the Chagford Circuit in 1852, and two years later, on the fifth day of March 1854, he departed this life in the fifty-fourth year of his age. By his side sleeps the dust of his noble wife, Ann Arthur Brooks, who before her marriage had been one of the most capable and successful of the band of maiden

preachers whom the Bible Christians were the first to employ, and whose labours were so signally blessed in the early days of the denomination. For twenty-one years she served as a Circuit Minister, and was the means of leading many to the feet of Christ—among them, James Way, who afterward became a Minister, and went out as a Missionary to the newly discovered goldfields of South Australia, in 1850, where his son—the late Sir Samuel Way—became the celebrated jurist and filled the office of Chief Justice, and on many occasions acted as Deputy-Governor.

A few paces distant is the rugged granite monument of the noted Dartmoor Miller and Philosopher, William Perryman, who forms the subject of another chapter. Here, too, is the grave of James Crocker, the saintly Local Preacher, and of his gifted son, James—a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects and sometime President of that distinguished Society, who, as a youth, had won the silver medal of the Society for his drawings of the ancient Guildhall of the city of Exeter. Another modest stone marks the resting-place of William Webber, who, although a humble toiler, developed a rare gift of public utterance and became a Local Preacher of a high order: and his death at an early age was greatly lamented. Near the entrance is the long line of graves of the Dunning family, whose lengthy association with the Circuit was so helpful and honourable, and is still of gracious memory.

Yet one other grave claims our attention. It is that of a man whose name will live in honour as



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## The Story of Providence Chapel 33

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long as the Church itself shall last, and whose record must shine in all future chronicles of the Missionary enterprise—Thomas Grills Vanstone, the pioneer Missionary to the province of Yunnan, in Western China. He was born at West Putford, Devon, in 1851, and at nineteen years of age he went to London in search of a livelihood. He soon obtained a good appointment and turned his thoughts to the gay pleasures of the Metropolis. But, passing one day the Jubilee Chapel in Hoxton, he was arrested by the name VANSTONE in large letters on the announcement board of that sanctuary. The preacher announced was the late Rev. I. B. Vanstone, the Foreign Missionary Secretary of the Bible Christian Denomination. He at once resolved to attend the following Sunday and hear his namesake preach. The message of that service awoke him to a sense of his need of salvation, and finally drew him to Christ. Soon he was called to preach, and so promising were his efforts that in 1875 he was sent as a supply to the Faversham Circuit in Kent. The following year he was accepted for the full work of the Ministry, and after five years' faithful service in the West, he was appointed to Lee, London, where he built a new church and gave proof of his ability as a pioneer worker. He attended the historic Conference of 1884 in the city of Exeter, when Dr. Hudson Taylor made his great appeal to the Denomination to take up a share of the work in China; and there, with another young Minister, Samuel Thomas Thorne, he offered himself for the foreign field.

On July the 9th, 1885, after a long and perilous

journey up the Yangtse, they entered the capital city of Yunnan Fu. Their arrival there caused no small stir, for very few white men had reached so far into the interior at that date. Superstition and persecution held them in peril of their lives ; but as the years passed they inspired confidence in the hearts of the natives, and laid the foundations of one of the most wonderful of modern Missionary enterprises — comprising, as I write, some 163 preaching centres, 52 organized churches, 5335 adult members, 9666 inquirers and probationary members, and 6782 scholars ; while hospital and educational work is in progress, though at present disorganized by the revolution. And he whose consecrated life and labours set going the vast work in that far-away land lies sleeping here—the mortal remains of him—in this peaceful moorland cemetery, so remote from the busy haunts of men. I never stand by that holy grave and read the simple record of the man upon the white marble stone without a thrill :

IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
REV. T. G. VANSTONE,  
B. C. MINISTER,  
WHO ENTERED INTO REST  
MAY 13TH, 1898,  
AGED 47 YEARS.

HE WAS ONE OF THE FIRST MISSIONARIES  
TO CHINA, AND FOR NEARLY FOUR YEARS  
PASTOR OF THE CHAGFORD CIRCUIT.

“ I have fought a good fight,  
I have kept the faith.”

His constitution, never of the strongest, broke down under the strain of the immeasurable task ;



and frequent attacks of malaria compelled his return to England in 1893. His last services were for the Mission that he loved. He had been acting as deputation to a neighbouring Circuit, and on his return he collapsed and was soon translated to higher service.

It was a great chapter which closed with that hallowed mound in the cemetery of Providence Chapel. It is a Divine romance that sheds its lustre about the name writ here upon the sculptured stone, and his is a glory that will never fade. There are thousands in that far land of Sinim who will never cease to thank God for the gift of Thomas Grills Vanstone and the gracious work which he pioneered among them.

How plainly I see him still, the man of medium height with that noble brow of his; and the pure, speaking eyes; and a countenance that shone from the glory of the Shekinah cloud; so gracious in spirit, so sweetly human, so neatly attired, that all who knew him loved him. I do not wonder that twenty-five years after he had left them the Dartmoor folk felt they must pay a further tribute to his memory; and set up in the chief sanctuary of the Circuit a worthy memorial of him. None present on that memorable occasion in 1924 will ever forget that wonderful service, the crowded church at Whiddon Down, the homely moorland folk from a radius of miles around, the solemn hush that fell upon the assembly, and the emotion surging in our hearts as that honoured Missionary, Frank Dymond, himself now a veteran, recalled the toils and triumphs of the hero, and drew aside the curtain;

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disclosing to us the memorial. Never before had I so truly realized the meaning of the words of Hebrew wisdom :

“The memory of the just is blessed.”

There are others sleeping around who, in their more limited spheres, endeavoured to fashion their lives according to the pattern revealed to them in the Mount, and who kept alight the lamp of the Evangel in these parts. They now rest from their labours, and their works do follow them : and as I dwell on the record of these hundred years at Providence Chapel, I cannot but feel that there are very few spots in the fair county of Devon more hallowed than this quiet moorland shrine, and that the angels of the Lord must surely hold traffic here.

**III**  
**THE VILLAGE CLOCK-DOCTOR**

All are scattered now and fled,  
Some are married, and some are dead ;  
And when I ask, with throbs of pain,  
Ah ! when shall they all meet again ?  
As in the days long since gone by,  
The ancient timepiece makes reply—

“ For ever—never !  
Never—for ever.”

Never here, for ever there,  
Where all parting, pain, and care,  
And death and time shall disappear—  
For ever there, but never here !  
The horologe of Eternity  
Sayeth this incessantly—

“ For ever—never !  
Never—for ever.”

LONGFELLOW.

### III

#### THE VILLAGE CLOCK-DOCTOR

THE village of Spreyton, on the northern boundary of Dartmoor, is said to be the very centre of the fair county of Devon. It commands a grand view of the majestic Dartmoor tors southward, and of Exmoor far away to the north, with a vast range of arable land around. Spreyton is a typical village of the Devonshire hill country—breezy, healthful, and of peaceable tenor. During my pastorate of the Circuit, it consisted mainly of one slender street of thatched cottages, one of which served as the post office and general stores, and another as the village inn. Close by stand the ancient church and parsonage, well-nigh hidden from view by a grove of sheltering beech trees, though high above them rises the fine old granite tower, a conspicuous landmark for many miles around. Adjoining the glebe is the Home Farm, or Barton, as it is called in Devonshire, which tradition holds to have been the home of one of the characters in the celebrated Dartmoor song, "Widcombe Fair."

A short distance down the hillside is another group of cottages, of modern type, and a modest red-brick Methodist Chapel; while a little way in from the main road, to left and right, are a few scattered farmsteads. Midway between the two

groups stands the more imposing residence of the Right Hon. George Lambert, who so long represented the Division in Parliament, and of whose political reputation Spreytonians are justly proud ; though all are not of his party. In politics they were about equally divided, and the line of their political cleavage might be said to have stood generally for that of their religious persuasions.

But there was no question as to the superiority of the Methodist Cause, in spiritual vitality, at the beginning of the century ; and even the Anglicans themselves readily admitted it. The Parish Church, a spacious fabric of the usual Dartmoor Gothic type, had fallen into a state of dilapidation ; and the aged incumbent—a man of great scholarship and a recluse, was unable to cope with the task of restoration. His classic tomes were his delight ; nor could he easily find contact with his rustic flock, though all held him in honour, and some spoke with awe of his intellectual attainments. The order of service in the church was held to be dry and dull ; and so, for some years, the drift had been away from the great grey church to the little red-brick chapel ; and the Methodist Minister who visited the village regularly could count on the support of a goodly company of people.

For the good Vicar I often felt a touch of sympathy that he had been so forsaken of his flock ; yet I could not blame them that they had found their way to what seemed to them pastures green and new : and there was certainly something more cheery in the homely order of Methodist services than in the great musty vault of the Mother Church.



THE VILLAGE CLOCK-DOCTOR

*Photo by Cronen Photo Co., Exeter]*



THE BROTHER-MINOR

*Photo by Kelly, Newton Abbot]*





The Vicar, undeterred by empty pews, still held on his course, faithfully following the rubrics on the Sabbath, and as faithfully retiring again for the week into the company of the Classics. He must have pitied, sometimes, his simple-minded folk, with their little interests of the hour ; as he, on the Olympian heights and in the Elysian shades, held communion with the Great. But to his credit be it said, that he never despised them, nor showed bitterness to those who had left him. The difficulty was, that he was living in the past, and they were living in the present, and there was that in the Methodist order which came more nearly to the heart of things, as they understood them.

Now the heart and soul of the Methodist Church at Spreyton was a devoted and amiable little man who bore the name of Jordan—Thomas Jordan. He was a placid and persistent soul, with no slightest trace of the turbulency of the river after which he was called ; and his loyalty to his Church was beautiful to see. He simply lived for her : she was the delight of his eyes, and every touch of improvement at the little sanctuary seemed to give him joy. And in this his wife was scarce one jot behind him, though she was of quite different temperament. Thomas and Elizabeth Jordan have long since passed into the World of Light ; but theirs are sweet names to me, and they waken hallowed memories. Thomas, when first I made his acquaintance, was a delicate man of about sixty-five. His limbs were crippled with rheumatism ; but his face, with its noble features and broad, grey beard, was a picture of heavenly serenity, which

showed a nature ripening for the fellowship of the celestials. Through hard toil and much exposure, Thomas had aged prematurely, and his asthmatic and rheumatic tendencies had compelled an early retirement from the life of the fields ; so he set up in a small way as a repairer of clocks and watches, and achieved no small skill in the practice of the same. By dint of hard toil and plain living, Thomas and Elizabeth had managed to "put by a little for a rainy day," as they say in the West, and so to keep themselves from the disgrace of parish pay. And the word *disgrace* is not too strong to express that dread feeling with which every honest toiler in the West Country faced the contingency of having at last to appeal to the parish to aid him eke out his closing years. Though I could never understand why they should have so regarded it, seeing how shamefully inadequate was the remuneration they had received, and that too for hard work which was so vital to the needs of the community.

It was good that in his later years Thomas was able to augment his small income by repairing his neighbours' chronometers. Clocks Thomas loved, and handled them with the tenderest care ; and Elizabeth looked on with evident pleasure at her husband's handicraft. There were generally three or four "grandfather" clocks in the big kitchen, which nearly summed up the ground floor accommodation of their humble home : and beside these were sometimes an old American timepiece or two ; and a quaint little Dutch face with its long weight and chain exposed, its pendulum marking time

against the whitewashed wall ; and most of these would be in various stages of convalescence. Thomas treated them all as humans. He knew the "ins and outs" of them—every cog, wheel, and spring ; their idiosyncrasies, predilections, and delinquencies. The ticks, growls, and irregularities of sound were intelligible language to him, and the music of their bells a delight.

It was touching to watch with what care he would handle some decrepit old clock that had degenerated into habits of error, or lapsed from the truth-telling virtue of its kind ; and with what patience he would win it back again into the way of honest truth. I have seen him do little delicate bits of work with his few simple tools that would have done credit to a master of the craft. He would cast a new figure for the corner of the dial, or cut a new wheel—anything to restore to the object of his care its former moral character and honesty of countenance.

An old timepiece of some two hundred years took my fancy, and I purchased it from him. He handed it over to me as though it were a loved child of his heart for whose charge I should have to give an account. Its cheery brass face went to my heart when first I saw it in Jordan's kitchen. It had worn through some of its parts, and required general overhauling. A considerable delay tested my patience ; but Thomas would not let his work go out of his hands until he was as sure of it as mortal could be. At length, however, it came to me in a farmer's spring-trap, polished and in good order, and it has been with me now these twenty years

or more ; and beloved for its own sake, as for that of the little man whose skill gave to it a new lease of life and usefulness. Now often when I hear the measured beat of its pendulum and its clear-sounding bell ring out the passing hours, I think of the little cottage at Spreyton with its windows full of flowers, and its two honest souls, and all they meant to the Cause of God in their pleasant village.

Elizabeth Jordan was the best of managers. She knew how to make a little go a long way, as they had to do in the West. Her home was spotlessly clean, and the bright plates on the dresser reflected the light of the wood fire that burned on the large, open hearth. She was herself the embodiment of cleanliness, of fresh countenance, and a contented mind. Built on a large plan physically, she was a simple, homely soul ; and though she had no children of her own, she was of a motherly disposition. At the Chapel she took the lead at the teas, and was a true mother in Israel. Thomas and she, between them, did the cleaning at the Chapel, and imparted to it much of the neatness and attractiveness of their own home. As a rule, Thomas kindled the fire there in the Winter, and attended to the sanctuary lamps, which were of such a complex order that no one else seemed to be able to coax them into their fit and proper mood. They were ideal temple-keepers — Thomas and Elizabeth. Always, on Winter evenings, he was there well before time, and both preacher and hearers knew that by the hour of their arrival there would be a cheerful fire and a well-lit Chapel.

How plainly I see him yet ! his frail form moving slowly down the road ; his ample cape blown out on the breeze—a garment whose origin I could never trace ; but whose service of long years was writ large in the faded colour of it ; and his staff steadying him against the force of the storm. As I recall that fine face of his, the noble forehead, honest eyes, and strong, sensitive mouth, I wonder what he might have been had he enjoyed the educational advantages which some to-day so lightly hold. It was a face that would have done duty for a prophet, a poet, or philosopher, and would not have done discredit to either. I am certain that he had at times great emotions, and that the fire of the Lord burnt in his bones ; though he was a man of few words, and most unpretentious in manner.

In spirit he was gentle and magnanimous ; but nothing would turn him from the thing he had purposed. In his own quiet way he knew what he was out for, and generally got there. Fearing perhaps that the villagers might think him a man of more means than he possessed, he did all his giving quietly ; and only his Minister knew the extent of his generosity. His gifts were, for him, munificent ; and all the more so in that they were the result of constant self-denial. When the new school was built adjoining the Chapel, his was among the largest contributions. They were both lovers of Foreign Missions, and often spoke with great affection of the pioneer, Thomas Grills Vanstone, who on his return to England, as we have seen, served in the Circuit, and died there.

It is no wonder that this faithful couple enjoyed the esteem of their neighbours, and had among them a powerful influence for good ; and when in the closing years their own strength failed them and others came on to take their place in the church, there was no regret with them ; only feelings of thankfulness that others were being raised up to carry on the loved work which they knew they must so soon relinquish. So they moved on to their end, enriched in thought and spirit by their long years of service. I was not with them during the closing years ; but others can bear witness to the truth of the Scripture in their case that " The path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Their dust sleeps in the old churchyard, under the shadow of the tall beeches, and only a few paces from the old home in which they lived so many years. The Lord in Whom they trusted hath not suffered their lamp to be put out ; for the sweet remembrance of them lives on in the hearts of all who knew them ; and I doubt not that, in that Invisible Temple to which they have passed, their eyes now see the King and the far-stretching country, and that some nobler form of service engages their powers.

One evening, not long since, I made a pilgrimage to their graves. It was the eve of the first day of May, and the sun, a huge disc of copper-gold, was declining behind the distant hills. The boughs of the beeches were aflame with its glory. All around, the sward was resplendent with primroses, and the rooks were homing to their nests. Faint sounds of children's voices came on the air ; otherwise, all was



still, and I stood above their two graves awhile in meditation. On the white marble stone I read their simple record :

IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
THOMAS JORDAN,  
WHO DIED APRIL 25TH, 1912,  
AGED 73 YEARS ;  
ALSO  
ELIZABETH JORDAN,  
WIFE OF THE ABOVE,  
WHO DIED JANUARY 28TH, 1916,  
AGED 77 YEARS.

“ Jesus calls us o’er the tumult  
Of our life’s wild restless sea.”

Loving hands had recently laid there a tribute to their memory—a simple bunch of cottage garden blooms — wallflowers, narcissi, and forget-me-nots, tied with a white ribbon, and with a card inscribed, “ In loving Remembrance ”—a not unworthy token of two worthy lives, seeing they had none of their own to mourn their loss.

Our conventional notions of the Great Hereafter are those of a timeless state, and for such we have indeed a Scriptural authority ; for the angel of the Apocalypse was seen standing, one foot upon the land and the other upon the sea ; and was heard to declare with a loud voice that “ Time shall be no longer.” There, in that eternal world, there will be no more broken-down constitutions, nor broken-down clocks ; neither will the craft of the clock-mender be required. But we may be certain that such as Thomas Jordan, and Elizabeth his wife, will have their place in that perfect system concerning

which Ezekiel spoke in that amazing figure of his :

“ And their appearance and their work  
Were as it were, a wheel within a wheel . . .  
And where the living creature went,  
The wheels went beside them :  
For the spirit of the living creature  
It was in the wheels . . .  
And the appearance of the wheels and their working  
Was like unto the colour of a beryl.”



**I V**

**JOHN DURANT, THE DARTMOOR  
EVANGELIST**

O glory of the lighted mind  
How dead I'd been, how dumb, how blind . . .  
I thought all living creatures knelt  
For rapture of the joy I felt.  
The narrow station-wall's brick ledge,  
The wild hops withering in the hedge,  
The lights in huntsman's upper storey  
Were parts of an eternal glory—  
Were God's eternal garden flowers :  
I stood in bliss at this for hours.

JOHN MASEFIELD.

## I V

### JOHN DURANT, THE DARTMOOR EVANGELIST

#### THE WONDERFUL STORY OF THE DARTMOOR EVANGELIST

**J**UST as the homely Dartmoor folk were making final preparations for the Christmas of 1924, there passed into the larger life one of the quaintest and most lovable of Dartmoor characters, in the person of John Durant, well known in the West Country as "The Seedsman Evangelist." The story of his life and service for his fellows is a modern romance of Conversion ; and as a study in Christian psychology it would have rejoiced such students of the subject as Starbuck and the far-famed Professor James of Harvard University. There are few more remarkable examples of the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion than that afforded by the subject of this sketch. Wonderful indeed was the change which was wrought, not only in the man himself, but also in his environment. It is a story well worth telling in these days, when so many seem uncertain of the great spiritual experiences set forth in the New Testament Scriptures. If ever a man evidenced the glorious reality of saving grace, the sweet charm of the sanctified life, and the power of believing prayer, that man was John Durant.

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## 52    Some Dartmoor Saints and Shrines

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On the northern boundary of Dartmoor, amid a wealth of rich red farm-lands and leafy Devonshire lanes, sleeps the old, straggling village of North Tawton, so called from the clear waters of the river Taw, which wind their way down the valley beneath from the wild slopes of Cawsand Beacon. The village is just a typical Devonshire village, that once made some effort to assume the dignity of a country town, but with no apparent success. Its one street of consequence ambles up the hillside from the river-bend in the vale to the old steepled church on its knoll, whose shingled spire and gilded vane pierce the grove of giant trees that well-nigh obscures the ancient fane. Here is the centre of the village life—the church, the tiny market-place, the hostel, and a group of small shops. For the most part, the old homes are unshapely and irregular; but not without Nature's own adornment of shrubs, garden plots, and window plants. At the foot of the village is one of the few remaining relics of a once flourishing local industry—a small serge factory, where good homespun is still produced, with a reputation far afield. It serves as an object-lesson too, for all who desire the improvement of labour conditions; exemplifying the advantages of factory life where skies are still clear and the air fragrant with the breath of scented flowers.

But though North Tawton lies in a goodly, pleasant land, with a rare prospect of Dartmoor hills and vales, it has had no great reputation for religious zeal. Indeed, the older folk still recall how dark and difficult a place it was for spiritual work in their early days. The better-class people

were too often under the influence of the Drink evil, and the poor were ignorant and oppressed. Once only, in his many journeys to and from the Delectable Duchy, John Wesley ventured into North Tawton ; and then, local tradition states, he met with such a hostile reception that he obeyed the Scriptural injunction and shook the dust from off his feet against the inhabitants. It is said that a leading man of the place raised a mob against him, and called out a pack of hounds to break up his meeting. Indignant at such behaviour, the great preacher warned them of the consequences of their wickedness in vain, and then pronounced that the judgment of God would come upon them and that their town would not prosper. True it is, that afterwards a great spiritual dearth pervaded the neighbourhood, and business became stagnant and the population declined. But in after years a better condition obtained in things spiritual. Work in the old Parish Church was more effectively done, the Independents built a chapel on the very site where the hounds had been kennelled which were brought out against Wesley ; and the Bible Christians, a minor Methodist body of local origin, brought much blessing into the village in the great revivals which took place in the first part of the nineteenth century under the preachers of William O'Bryan.

The social centre of the village life was the large hostel near the church. Here on the monthly market-day the farmers forgathered for their business transactions and their friendly glass of grog, as they called it. Here, too, at night, the local

loafers and drinkers squandered their hours ; some drawn, no doubt, by the lure of the cheerful ale-house fire and the company that sat around it ; and while the house was always " respectably conducted," as the Trade puts it—it was none the less evident that the traffic was working its dire effect on some of its victims.

Into such a community and such a home was born, some sixty-four years ago, a babe whose career was destined to alter the whole life of the family, and to bring blessing to many other souls. Of him it may be said also in those memorable words of St. John's Gospel : " There was a man sent from God whose name was John." The father had long been the proprietor of the " George Hotel," and so John's early years were spent, as he would humorously say, " in the midst of publicans and sinners." There is little doubt that he was quite happy in such company as he grew into manhood ; for he was himself of a most convivial nature ; could sing a comic song, and crack a joke with the gayest of them. These qualities proved to be a valuable asset to the business, for John was the life and soul of the convivial circle, and very popular with his companions. He had left school at a fairly early age, and had served for some years behind the bar when his father died, leaving the business in charge of the elder brother, William. John still continued as barman under the new régime.

One day when thus occupied, he was the subject of a strange visitation of the Spirit of God. Nothing of note seems to have led up to this experience :

it came as unpremeditated and as unexpected as the wind which "bloweth-where it listeth"; and the gay, sparkling young barman, full of fun and nonsense, was apprehended of the Lord Jesus. His true spiritual state stood clearly revealed to him—the emptiness of his funny jokes and the aimlessness of his life, the waste of time and substance, occasioned by the stuff he was dealing out over the counter; and, alas! also the waste of precious human souls. The clear light of conviction shone right into his heart, and a Voice spoke to him quite clearly, "I want you to come out from here!" It was as though One stood right by him and rang that challenge in his ears, and he was so stricken with the sense of sin that he resolved there and then never again to serve in the bar.

Out he went to await the leading of the gentle light of the Spirit which ultimately came to him. To the amazement of his relatives and boon companions he confessed himself a follower of Christ, to walk only in the way the great Master would lead him. The news spread like wildfire that John Durant was converted—had turned Methodist. A tremendous conflict ensued, and John had to fight his way into the light. It was not in him to do things by halves, least of all now that he had received spiritual awakening; and so he was firmly resolved to rest not until he stood forth in the full daylight of the Divine forgiveness and favour. His friends coaxed him, and his old companions sought to cajole him out of his new-found interest. Milder methods gave place later to persecution; but to no purpose, other than to strengthen his determina-



tion to persevere. All their criticisms he met with our Lord's own startling question, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" He observed of this phase of his life, "The Lord gave me courage and comforted me."

But as yet there was no joyous assurance of sins forgiven. For some time he laboured under a deep sense of sin, and was in travail for his soul. But God had already appointed the means of his deliverance. The late Mr. Reader Harris, K.C., had arranged to conduct a holiness convention at Plymouth, and a special invitation was sent John to attend, which he accepted. He passed with others into the inquiry room and found peace. "I soon had the assurance of Divine forgiveness; the burden of my heart rolled away, and I was filled with joy and peace in believing that Jesus had indeed borne my sins in His own body on the tree. I had the clear witness that I was born again, and made a member of the Body of Christ": his own version of the change. It was indeed a marvellous experience, a transition from bondage to glorious liberty of soul. From Plymouth he returned with a shining countenance and a new and thrilling sense of the presence and power of God in his life; and to the very end he carried in his eyes the reflection of that sacred flame which Divine Love had kindled on the altar of his heart.

Eager for more light on the blessing that had come to him, and on the privileges of the Christian believer, he gave himself to prayer and a close study of the Word. The Bible became an illuminated book to him, and he sought to grow in grace and to



A MOORLAND CHAPEL

*Photo by Pearce, Tavistock*

*[Facing page 56]*



attain to the measure of the stature of a full man in Christ Jesus. He cried with Xavier, "Yet more of Thee, O my God! Yet more!"

His study of the Word convinced him of the soundness of the Methodist doctrine of Sanctification, and he saw that the power of God could deliver him from sinful tendencies and keep him pure. The passage in 1 Thess. v. 23, 24 was forcibly applied to his mind, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that called you, who will also do it." In his own words, "I confessed my inbred sin to God, and He cleansed me in the precious blood of Christ that cleanseth from all sin. I asked Him to baptize me with the Holy Ghost and with power; and He did it. Then I had such power from on high as I had never dreamt of—power to live the Christian life, power over temptation, power in prayer, and power to witness to my fellow-men for Christ."

How manifest that power has been, and how well that witness has been borne, many in the West Country can testify. In the little chapels scattered about Dartmoor, in the ingle-nooks of the old farmsteads, and by the wayside, John Durant told to his fellows the story of the great thing which the Spirit of God had done for him, with the light of heaven in his eyes and the ring of glad assurance in his voice; and his sanctified humour did much to win a way into hearts that may have been otherwise closed to him. He had become a new man in

a new world. The light of the Vision was on every thing about him, "The light that never was on sea or land." He saw the familiar objects of the landscape suffused with heavenly glow: trees, flowers, and the rugged tors of Dartmoor were aflame with the glory of God, because they took the reflection of his own illuminated spirit.

John's testimony for his Lord produced some remarkable results. It is computed that some fifteen hundred persons were brought to Christ through his simple ministrations. He believed in the personal appeal; and with him, personal conversation on the things of the Kingdom was never strained, and never seemed out of place. Perhaps it was the atmosphere of his personality, as well as the natural gift he had of handling men, which set him on such good terms with the listener and gave him a direct appeal to the heart.

To meet him on the road or in the market-place was to pass into a new atmosphere. The smile, the hand-grip, the cheery voice, called one back into some fresh, sweet world of feeling from which one was conscious of having wandered; but which yet remained the native home of the soul. To converse with him was to have one's faith in God and humanity restored, and to feel that life was a grand and noble thing. One could not perhaps always agree with his interpretations of the Truth, and the sectarian would sometimes be impatient with one whose life did not hold to the conventional groove: nevertheless, none communed with him without the conviction that he was a Chosen Vessel of the Lord. He put a larger interpretation on Christian liberty

than that of the strict ecclesiast ; but that often gave him an appeal to men of a type not too favourable to the organized methods of the Church.

Having renounced the liquor traffic, he developed the business of seeds merchant, which necessitated much travelling over a wide area, and many nights spent in hotels and rural inns. His former association with the Trade gave him an appeal to many of the inn-keepers and their customers ; and he made full use of his opportunities. In various licensed houses he led souls to Christ. "It is glorious," he would say, "to have a revival in a public-house." Andrew-like, his first concern after his conversion was the salvation of his own brother. For three and a half years he prayed earnestly that William might be led into the Light, and give up the hotel. "All that time," he observed, "I never spoke to him directly on the subject ; but let the Holy Spirit do His work in His own way." At length his prayers were answered : William surrendered to Christ, forfeited the business, and turned all the liquor into the gutter of the street. As John himself put it, "William gave up the hotel and got BEAUTIFULLY saved." And beauty was the word for the experience ; for the beauty of the Lord came upon William's fine countenance and his consecrated spirit. I shall never forget his testimony to the grace of God, borne many years after in a Love-feast at a District Synod ; and how the thrill of the Spirit went from heart to heart, while his face, like Stephen's, grew radiant with celestial light.

For the goodwill of the hotel business, William



was offered £800, but he refused to sell it. He could have secured a rental of £40 per annum for the use of the bar and cellar, but that also he refused, on the ground that a business that was not good for him was not good for others, and so he must make a complete sacrifice of it. The hotel was accordingly transformed into a private house, and a centre for the seeds business. John was wont to say in his own quaint way, "When my brother was converted the hotel was converted too."

The first use to which the old bar was put after its transformation was that of a meeting-room for a mothers' meeting. The two brothers were now in happy and gracious fellowship, and for years their spare time was spent in conducting missions in the neighbouring towns and villages. Thus they continued together until God called William to the higher service, and he passed triumphantly to his reward. From those missions much good resulted. A farmer and his wife, who had heard of their work, came a long way to see them, and went home and started meetings in their own house, resolving, at a loss of some £40 to £50 per annum, to give over the making of cider. A neighbouring farmer of theirs also became converted, opened his house for preaching, and this led to the building of a chapel.

Amid all these blessings came some severe tests of faith for John ; but he proved himself not unequal to them. One day God seemed to say to him, "You have some money out on mortgage : will you call it in and give it Me for My work ?" It was a searching test. But, "I sought power to do it and He gave it me. I also asked how He would



have me distribute it, and it was made plain to me." Foreign Missions headed the list with £120. The local Bible Christian Chapel, and the Hoxton Mission of the same denomination had each £50, as had also the Salvation Army, the Keswick Mission, and Barnardo's Homes. Various other sums went to orphanages, and institutions for the blind—in all £560. The treasured nest-egg had all gone to help good causes; but John's joy was complete. For the future he was absolutely dependent on the providence of God; and his faith and courage did not fail him. Having no dependants and being a man of simple tastes, he continued to the end to lay up treasure in heaven. In his experience, the great truth, **THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH**, received new and remarkable confirmation.

On one occasion, after having contributed £50 to the trust fund of a local chapel, he returned home at evening and found a letter awaiting him with a cheque for that amount. It was from a former customer of his father's, who had some years before contracted a debt which had been written off as a dead loss. On this, John would say, "My Heavenly Father never remains long in any man's debt." He was always a great believer in the theory of the Inward Light and the Inward Voice. As he was going to the station one morning the Voice bade him book for London *via* Bristol instead of the South-Western route. This was out of the usual order and somewhat inconvenient for him. It meant breaking the journey at Exeter and a considerable wait there; and he could not see the purpose of it. Still, he obeyed the Voice, and had

not long to wait for the illumination. Leaving the train at Exeter, he made his way to the waiting-room ; and there, sitting before the fire, with his head buried in his hands, was a young man, evidently in great distress. John got into conversation with him and found that he had that morning received a message summoning him to the bedside of his dying mother, and his fear was that she may be gone before he got there. Tender words of sympathy were spoken, and it was agreed that as they were both going *via* Bristol they would travel together. In the train that morning the young man and the evangelist knelt together, and peace came to the troubled heart, and the joy of conversion. When speaking of this and similar incidents in his life John would say, " Ah, my Heavenly Father knows better than I the way I should take."

In strenuous service and loving zeal, the somewhat slender physique of the man showed signs of wear at a comparatively early age, and from 1910 he had to husband his strength ; but during the war he gave such service as he could to his stricken country. The scarcity of cotton gave a new value to a species of moss that grows sparsely on Dartmoor, and this was requisitioned in the military hospitals. This sphagnum moss is a light and feathery substance and not easy to get ; yet he tramped just 2000 miles in quest of it, and secured something like two and a half tons in all.

When last I saw him, after many years' absence from the county, the snows of winter had gathered on his brow, and he walked with a step less firm and sprightly ; but the old, glad lustre was in his eye

and the soul was still unutterably full of glory and of God. I shall not forget that last glad meeting in the little town of Okehampton and the communion we had together. It was not long after that I heard of his illness and death. Loving hands bore his body for burial back to his native village ; and there, in the peaceful little *campo santo* where some others sleep who shared with him the joy of the Lord in the days of the Revival, his mortal remains await the resurrection of the just. The sward is already green on his grave ; the sombre yew and sparkling laurel keep sentinel there ; and the peace is unbroken save by the song of the birds and the sighing of the breezes. His wish is indeed gratified, that his dust should rest here so near to the scene where the Spirit of the Lord first quickened him into newness of life. In his passing the Dartmoor folk sustained a great loss, but his influence remains as sweet as the perfume of the scented heather on the moorland that he loved so well.



4

V

A FAMILY OF DISTINCTION

"The common people," "the untutored poor,"  
"The rude forefathers of the hamlet." So  
We label them; but little do we know  
What latent forces lie in the obscure

And unromantic sons of common toil.

They come and go; nor dream how very near  
Their daily lives approach that radiant sphere  
Where souls adventurous seize life's golden spoil.

Cramped in their narrow bounds, by cares oppressed,  
They to their latent powers but seldom wake:  
Living their lives but for the living's sake,  
They pass unsung to their unhonoured rest.

But now and then, some spark of heavenly flame  
Smites to the very centre of the clod;  
Then the quick soul leaps up to meet its God,  
And lowly lives are crowned with deathless fame.

Some deeper yearning haunts the common days—  
A strange mute feeling for celestial things:  
Then from the humble stock new virtue springs,  
And glory shines upon the dusty ways.

L. H. C.

## V

### A FAMILY OF DISTINCTION

#### THE ROMANCE OF THE WAY FAMILY

THE little village of Morchard Bishop, situated on the northern fringe of Dartmoor, lies well off the beaten track of men, and is perhaps the last place where one would look for a romance. Its one street of unpretentious houses reaches up the hillside to a wide open space which serves as the village green, and thence on to the noble old Parish Church which crowns the brow of the hill and commands a magnificent view of the surrounding country. Two or three tiny shops, the village post office, and a couple of neat stone-built chapels, are the only variations on the modest cottage homes which go to make up this quiet and secluded dwelling-place of men. Its only claim to distinction is, that it happens to be the centre of a large agricultural parish. Life moves slowly and uneventfully for the most part in Morchard Bishop, and the homely village folk hold on their ways with little to break the monotony, save the anniversaries of the Chapels and their Sunday Schools, and an occasional Circuit Rally.

But the village is pleasantly situated, amid the sloping pastures and the rich, red loam ploughlands that are so characteristic of the Devonshire scenery ;

and from the upper reach of it there are exquisite views of the Dartmoor range and its tors. Here, more than a century ago, the coming of the Methodists created no small stir amid the dry bones of the older ecclesiastical order as it then obtained ; and the followers of John Wesley from the neighbouring town of Crediton seemed to have been the pioneers of Morchard Bishop Methodism.

In a humble cottage home, near the centre of the village, there lived at the commencement of the nineteenth century a poor tradesman whose heart had been drawn out towards those early Methodists in admiration of their zeal and their self-denying efforts to save their fellow-men. There seems to be no record left of his exact relation to the Methodists ; but what is known of him is, that he favoured their work—unpopular as it was ; and lent them his horse to relieve their preachers on their long journeys over the lonely countryside. In the prime of life, both he and his wife passed away, leaving an orphan boy of tender years to face the hardships of the world. Such education as he had was obtained in the little village school ; and at quite an early age the lad was accustomed to amuse himself and others by imitating the Methodist preachers, and holding mimic services. Several deaths having taken place in his family, he was led to think seriously about eternal things, and to feel the need of his own soul.

One day, as he listened to the sermon in the Parish Church, he came under deep conviction of sin ; but the Vicar whose words had awakened him to the need of a Saviour, was unable to instruct



him in the clear plan of salvation, and the lad was distressed that there was no one in the parish whom he knew that could enlighten him. Ultimately he was led of the Spirit to attend a service where the message was delivered by one of the noble band of maiden preachers who did so much to establish the Bible Christian Church in the South of England ; and there he was soundly converted. This new experience set his soul aflame for the spiritual welfare of his neighbours, and gave him a thirst for knowledge ; and with his Bible, hymn-book, and Gurney's Biblical Dictionary, he sought to equip himself for the sacred work of the Ministry. His ability as a public speaker soon led to his being set down as a Local Preacher on the Circuit plan, and for three years he laboured with much acceptance, and travelled some few thousand miles to preach the Gospel in his own neighbourhood.

The call to enter the full work of the Ministry then came to him : he offered, and was accepted ; and at the Conference of 1826, he received his first appointment to the Weare Circuit in Somersetshire. One fine morning, in late Summer, with a change of clothing and his three books in a carpet bag, he bade farewell to his native village on his journey of sixty miles, and walked all the way. Little did the youth dream as he swung along the sweet country lanes of his beloved Devon that early dawn, how great things the Lord would do for him, or how far-reaching was to be the influence of this obedience of his to the call of the Spirit of Life. Could he have then foreseen the finished splendour of his dream it would have overawed him : it would

have been unbelievable. But no man can know to what honour he may come if he will but walk in obedience to the Voice which calls him ; and so it is not surprising that James Way's line was destined to reach even to the uttermost parts of the earth.

After a few months in the Weare Circuit, he was transferred to the Crewkerne Mission, where he was called upon to endure great hardship and no small persecution. On one occasion, a man who had listened to his preaching, asked him to his home to stay the night, and so to save him a long journey. But on their arrival it soon became evident that the wife resented his coming. She at once left the house. Later, the husband followed her, and after a while a youth came to say that he could not stay there the night. So he had to leave and make for a neighbouring inn. On another occasion, at Axminster, a man filled with hatred against the Methodists threatened to cut him down with a reaping-hook.

His next appointment was to the Chatham area in Kent, where he well-nigh lost his life in crossing the Medway, the boat having capsized, and he only being rescued on coming to the surface for the last time. Then followed a period in the Brighton Circuit, where an incident transpired which reveals the quality of the man. He had seen an advertisement offering for sale the nine volumes of Dr. Adam Clarke's Commentary, at half price, £9. The person offering them lived at Tenterden, some fifty miles away. The young enthusiast, with a stipend of only £28 per annum, walked all the way to Tenterden, secured the books, and brought them home on his

back : nine quarto volumes, and fifty miles ! Was it any wonder that his grit won through to great ends ? Mr. Way married about this time a gracious and helpful partner, a lady from Portsea ; and in 1847 he was elected President of the Bible Christian Conference. A period of serious illness threatened to end his useful life ; but prayer was made for him by the Church, and he had a remarkable recovery.

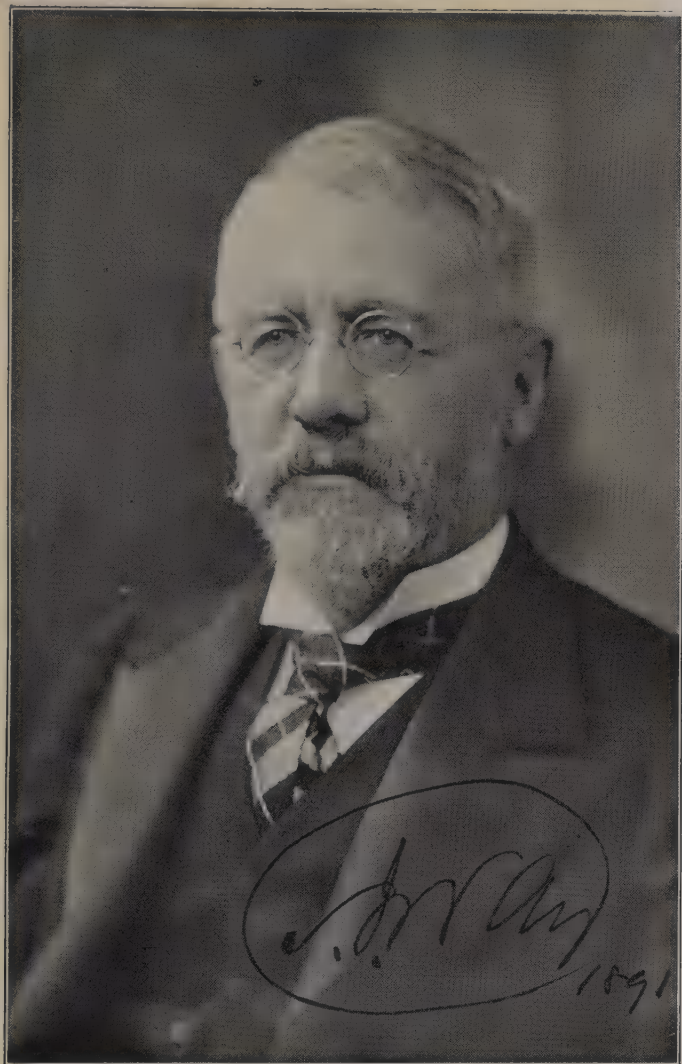
In 1849, many Cornish and Devon folk had joined in the rush to the newly discovered goldfields of South Australia ; and from some of these an urgent request came to the Conference to send them out Missioners. Consequently, the Conference of 1849 made an appeal to its Ministers, and James Way was the first to offer for the far field. He was then in the prime of life, and made himself well-nigh indispensable to the Home Churches, and was devotedly attached to his brethren. There are few scenes in the denominational history more moving than that which was enacted in the historic Chapel at Shebbear, when James Way and his wife came forward and dedicated themselves to the work to which they now felt they were called. Strong men shed tears, and the assembly was deeply moved.

All arrangements having been made, the faithful couple, with a brother minister, the Rev. James Rowe, embarked at Plymouth in the sailing ship *Anna Maria* on 12th August 1850. After a long and tedious voyage they landed in Australia on 15th November 1850. Here he soon got to work among the miners in the Bush country, and was the

means of establishing the Australian branch of the denomination. For many years he served on the various new stations that were opened up; and in the year 1877 retired at Adelaide from the full work of the Ministry. In that city he was honoured for his own sake, as well as for the fame which another of his name had won for his family. The end came peacefully for him on the 13th August 1884, but not before he had seen the most remarkable fulfilment of those ancient words, "Them that honour Me, I will honour."

When father and mother were leaving England on board the *Anna Maria* there was one thing which gave pain to the parting more than all others. They had to leave behind them their bright, promising lad of fourteen summers, Samuel Way, who was then pursuing his studies at the Denominational College at Shebbear. But two years after, Samuel followed them across the seas. Pursuing a brilliant career as a student, he decided to devote himself to the legal profession; and in 1861 was admitted to practice in the Supreme Court at Adelaide. In 1875 he entered the House of Assembly as member for Sturt; but within four months there was a change of Ministry, and Samuel Way was offered, and accepted, the portfolio of Attorney-General. On the death of Sir Richard Hanson in 1876, he succeeded him as Chief Justice of the Colony. Thus, within fifteen years, so rapid was his promotion, that he had reached the highest position open to his profession in the land of his adoption.

For many years Mr. Way served as Vice-Chan-



THE LATE CHIEF JUSTICE WAY

*Photo by Freeman, Sydney]*

*[Facing page 72*



cellor of the University of Adelaide, and in 1883 he was made Chancellor—which office he held to the day of his death. In 1890, he was first appointed Lieutenant-Governor of South Australia, and as such became chief representative of the Crown in the absence of the Governor-General, or at intervals between the retirement of one Governor and the appointment of his successor. In this capacity he served in all no less than six years and nine months—a longer period than any one of the Governors had served.

In 1891, the University of Oxford conferred on him the degree of D.C.L., a distinction which he greatly valued; and, in 1897, he was appointed as the first representative of the Australian Colonies on the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The Cambridge University also conferred on him the honorary degree of LL.D.; and in 1899 he received a Baronetcy. His tour around the world, in the nineties, was like a triumphal procession. In India and the United States of America he had a great reception, and at the Œcumenical Methodist Conference at Washington in 1891, he was regarded as the most distinguished layman present.

Through all these years of brilliant achievement in his profession, Sir Samuel never forgot his father's Church, though it was the least among the Methodist denominations. His reverence for, and devotion to, his venerable sire, were great to behold; and when the veteran attained to his Ministerial Jubilee in 1876, his distinguished son arranged a great reception for him in the town hall at Adelaide, and gloried in his father's reminiscences of his early



toils and triumphs. Unlike so many who have owed much to their Free Church origin, Sir Samuel never grew too large for his father's Church ; but found pleasure in acknowledging himself as belonging to the least of the tribes of Israel. Once, when a guest of the Governor-General, much to the surprise of the company, he inquired the nearest way to the modest Methodist Chapel, as he desired to worship there.

The Bible Christian Ministers of the Colony were among his most favoured friends, and his beautiful house, Montefiore, was always open to them. When visiting England in 1891, he purchased the freehold of Lake Farm, Shebbear, with the old homestead in which the first Bible Christian Society was founded, in 1815, and had it conveyed to the Connexion for the endowment of the Shebbear College. As a lad, I was present at the scene in the beautiful Greenbank Church, at Plymouth, when the Chief Justice, after an eloquent and thrilling speech of reminiscence and appreciation of his father's Church, received an address which was handed to him in a silver casket surmounted with a figure of Justice, by the President of the Conference. It was a great and moving scene, which profoundly impressed me. I remember, too, with what delight he entered into fellowship with the older Ministers present, and how gracious was his manner throughout : a true and noble English gentleman if ever there was one !

Some of the latest letters that came from his pen reached me from the Supreme Court in Adelaide in 1915, in view of the Centenary celebration of the



Bible Christian Church at the Exeter Conference of that date : and in these are evidences of the most ardent devotion to the people among whom he had his early spiritual training.

When he came to England for the last time, he was received by the King, and honoured by our ancient Universities, fêted and sought after wherever he went ; but any one who knew him could see he was never so happy as when he was presiding at some meeting of the Conference or enjoying the fellowship of some of the faithful friends and leaders of his father's Church. It is said that on one occasion a person of not too refined taste had the impertinence to remark that it was a wonder that the Chief Justice was so ready to own himself the son of a Bible Christian Minister, and had not forsaken his father's Church ; at which the Chief Justice was moved with indignation and gave utterance to some salutary admonition. Yet was he the most cosmopolitan of Christians, and numbered among his intimate friends members of almost every communion ; while Methodist Union was dear to his heart, and none did more than he to bring it about in the Australian Colonies. At his death the leaders of all branches of the Christian Church in South Australia, from the Catholic Archbishop to the Commanding Officer of the Salvation Army, paid the most touching tributes to the memory of the man, and the mighty Christian influence he had exerted.

The Chief Justice did not marry until late in life, and his wife passed away in 1914, greatly lamented. The last years of his life were years of much pain

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and sorrow ; he himself having had to undergo a severe operation ; but he bore all with true Christian fortitude, and passed peacefully to his reward on the 8th of January 1916, in the eightieth year of his age.

His remains were accorded a State Funeral, His Excellency the Governor-General attending with the Ministers of State. The President of the Legislative Council and the Speaker of Assembly, the Judges of the Supreme Court, members of both the Legislative Council and House of Assembly, and members of the Dominion Parliament were also present. The city was represented by the Mayor and the Town Clerk, and the naval and military forces were represented by their Commanding Officers. As the stately procession passed on its way to the family vault in the beautiful West-terrace cemetery, flags fluttered at half mast, and dense crowds of people lined the streets.

The service was held in the Pirie Street Methodist Church, and his pastor, the Rev. Henry Howard, now of the renowned Fifth Avenue Church, Brooklyn, paid an eloquent and impressive tribute to the memory of the beloved Chief Justice. Afterwards, the oak coffin, with its silver mountings, was deposited in the vault which already contained the remains of his honoured parents, his wife, and a sister ; and surrounding it are the graves of several Ministers of the Bible Christian Church of the early days. In all the churches, on the following Sunday, reference was made to the great loss the Colony had sustained in the passing of the Chief Justice, and the whole city was moved by the passing of one

who, while attaining to such high honours, had always a spirit of meekness and true human sympathy which won him the hearts of all classes of the community.

Tributes to his worth and work came from all quarters. His Majesty the King, through the Secretary of State, sent the following message :

“ The King commands me to convey an expression of the deep regret with which he has learned of the great loss suffered by South Australia in the death of Sir Samuel Way. His Majesty the King is confident that his conspicuous devotion to the duties of his high office, and to the interests of Australia, will long be remembered by those who had the privilege of knowing him, and of appreciating his sterling qualities.”

The Governor-General wrote :

“ I feel his death very keenly. His place will be more than difficult to fill. Sir Samuel died full of years and honours, and has left behind him a brilliant record of public service and usefulness which will always remain as the epitaph he would have chosen.”

And in the leading article of the *Adelaide Chronicle* appeared the following :

“ The late Chief Justice had, in an extraordinary measure, the faculty of making and keeping friends. . . . The breadth of his humanity and the liberality of his culture enabled him to understand and appreciate the most varied types of character and achievement. . . . He loved books, was well

versed in the history of the nations, and had a highly cultivated sense of the beautiful, both in Nature and Art. With all his learning he remained sincerely loyal to the simple religious faith of his childhood. To the Bible Christian denomination he kept unspotted his allegiance throughout a long career, marked by an exceptional degree of worldly success and honour."

So closed the earthly career of one who, beyond most men, had proved the truth of those great words from the Hebrew Book of Wisdom: "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before obscure men."

Nor does this complete the record of this worthy Devonshire family. Yet another, a cousin of the Chief Justice, the late Rev. James Horwill, entered the Ministry from the quiet village of Morchard Bishop. Leaving home in 1853 for his first Circuit, Chatham, he was ordained at Devonport in 1859, and served in many of the leading Circuits, being appointed Secretary of the Conference at Bristol in 1874, and honoured with the Presidency in 1880. Here again a distinguished son followed in his father's footsteps—the Reverend Herbert W. Horwill, M.A., of Wadham College, Oxford—who early gave abundant proof of great preaching ability, but whose health failed him for the work of the Ministry, since when he has done brilliant journalistic work both in England and America.

Truly this is a wonderful record for a country village family, and a complete justification of the

work which was undertaken in our rural districts in the degenerate days of the State Church, by the faithful men and women of the Free Churches. There can be no doubt that in thousands of instances the new flow of spiritual vitality that found its way into the obscure villages and hamlets of England and Wales, through the Methodist revival, brought to the lowliest folk opportunities which they could never have had otherwise ; and created a thirst for knowledge which led greatly to the enrichment of the intellectual, as well as the spiritual, life of the nation ; and thus enabled the finest elements of the common people to make their own peculiar contribution to the common heritage of the Church Universal.



**V I**

**THE ROMANCE OF THE HITTIS-  
LEIGH METHODISTS**

God should be most where man is least :  
So, where is neither church nor priest,  
And never rag of form or creed  
To clothe the nakedness of need—  
Where farmer-folk in silence meet,  
I turn my bell-unsummoned feet ;  
I lay the critic's glass aside,  
I tread upon my lettered pride,  
And, lowest seated, testify,  
To the oneness of humanity ;  
Confess the universal want,  
And share whatever Heaven may grant.

Not on one favoured forehead fell  
Of old the fire-tongued miracle,  
But flamed o'er all the thronging host  
The baptism of the Holy Ghost ;  
Heart answered heart : in one desire,  
The blending lines of prayer aspire ;  
" Where in My name meet two or three,"  
Our Lord hath said, " I there will be."

WHITTIER.



## VI

### THE ROMANCE OF THE HITTISLEIGH METHODISTS

FEW people outside of Devon have ever heard of Hittisleigh, and there are many Devonians to whom the name is unknown ; nor would they be able to locate it on the map of their county, for it is one of the least of Devonshire hamlets, hidden away in the fringe of the Dartmoor country, and in that lonely reach of it which lies between Chagford and Exeter. The traveller has well-nigh to lose *himself* to find this secluded hamlet, for it can only be reached by ambling roads that lead off from the main, across solitary landscapes where scarcely a house comes in view. The hamlet stands on high ground, though the conformation of the country thereabout deprives it of any distant view. There are less than a dozen homesteads in all ; and these are mostly of the low, thatched-roof type so common in the Dartmoor district. But within a radius of a mile or so there are about a dozen farmsteads, so that on special occasions Hittisleigh, by getting up early and bestirring itself, can muster a crowd of some sixty people, or even more.

At one end of the hamlet stands the day school, whose russet brick walls, so neat and trim, contrast pleasingly with those of the old, sober cottages that

seem to be oppressed with the weight of their years. Here, twice a day, the little group of rosy-faced children let loose for play make music that is pleasant to hear in the otherwise monotonous round of the days. Close by is the old forge, where the smith makes the horseshoes and repairs the farmers' implements; and the children coming home from school still look in at the open door and watch the flying sparks, as the children did so long ago, away in New England, who live immortal in the homely rhymes of Longfellow.

A few paces away stands the old inn, with nothing much to mark it off from the neighbouring houses, save a modest sign. Its trade has never flourished much since the Methodists found their way into the parish; and when I knew the district it had always a deserted appearance. Farther on, and on higher ground, rise the gables of the Barton Farm, among the trees; and close by, the hoar granite church and tower, beaten bare by the storms of some five hundred years. The farm next the Church is often known as "the Barton" in Devonshire, probably from the fact that the tithe barn stood near the Parish Church in olden times; and the term Barntown would naturally contract into Barton in the lazily moving lingo of the West Country. Sometimes, too, of yore, the Barton farm carried with it certain obligations to the Church other than that of its tithings—as, I was told, obtained at Hittisleigh—namely, the provision of a Sunday meal for the Incumbent and also of fodder for his horse, where the living was a plural charge. For Hittisleigh is one of the poorest of Devonshire

parishes and cannot support a parson of its own. So for ecclesiastical purposes it is linked on to the adjoining parish of Spreyton, whose Vicar officiates there once a Sunday — a system which, as in so many instances of the past, has left the Mother Church of the parish a somewhat desolate place, with no means of grace from Sabbath to Sabbath, and very little at that. Such was the condition of the Church during my residence in the locality ; and even worse it must have been a century ago.

It was this neglected state that called so loudly to the early Methodists of Chagford at that period. Stories of the ignorance and spiritual darkness of the Hittisleigh folk were then current in the surrounding parishes ; and again, as of old in Macedonia, the Voice cried, " Come over and help us ! " That Voice did not fall on deaf ears, for the Chagford Methodists were then quickened to a sense of their duty by means of a recent revival. The first Methodist preachers came to Hittisleigh in the early thirties of the last century, and their efforts met with much opposition and even persecution. But by the year 1840, the little Church was formed there, and held on its way rejoicing. Fortunately, the work made its appeal to some of the best folk in the parish, who nobly sustained it through its early period of trial.

For some time the Church, like that of the First Century in Rome, was a Church " in the house " ; there being no means of providing a suitable place of worship : and there is still preserved in the Circuit archives the Bishop of Exeter's license for the holding of services in a cottage in the parish of Hittis-

leigh. Two years later, there were no less than forty-two members of Society. This success provoked the enemy to anger ; but good numbers attended the preaching, and considerable excitement prevailed. Some came to hear the new teaching, some to mock, and some out of curiosity ; but many came with a deep conviction of their spiritual need and found a new and wondrous life for their souls. So grew the Word of God and multiplied among them.

Meanwhile, in a deep ravine some distance from the hamlet, an old cottage had been purchased and transformed into a chapel : for there was no one who would spare them the land in a more convenient place ; and here, for sixty years, the work of God was carried on with varying degrees of success. As soon as it was known that the Methodists had secured their Chapel and were worshipping in it, the enemy found an agency to oppose further, and even more drastically, the Cause which they so disliked. Slandorous reports were circulated, and these were followed by open violence ; the object being to drive the Methodists right out of the parish. But amid the beating of a drum, the jingling of horsebells, and the pelting of the doors with stones, the good folk held on their way and waxed stronger and stronger.

The new teaching caused here a similar controversy to that which the Gospel of St. Paul occasioned in the early days of the faith. Some said that the preaching about conversion was nonsense, "for there was nothing said about it in the Scriptures two or three hundred years ago." Others observed that

“what was being preached was from the Bible, and therefore must be right.” But the initiated went a step further, and declared that they *knew it was right*, for they had proved it by experience: and these it was whose witness laid the foundations of the good work which has gone on at Hittisleigh all these years.

The opposition became so violent that at last the power of the Law had to be called in to secure the peace; but though this broke up the gang of opponents, some of them carried the war into a “hole-and-corner” fight, which occasioned no small annoyance to the Methodists, though it did but make them more devoted than ever. One of the Ministers was asked home to tea at a certain farm, and when he arrived he found there two of the persecutors: a quarrel ensued between the members of the household, and a cup of tea was thrown in the face of the Minister. The good man reproved the two opponents and warned them that if they persisted in their opposition, they would assuredly come to an evil end. Alas! his forecast was fulfilled, for one of them died in great poverty, and would have been buried in a pauper’s grave, but for the kindness of a charitable neighbour; and the other was found drowned in a river some distance away. On another occasion, a leading Local Preacher, who was endeavouring to find his way down to the Chapel, was roughly handled, and had his lantern kicked out of his hand amid the jeering of the enemy.

The Cause was, however, strongly established; and for a quarter of a century counted greatly in

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the moral and spiritual life of the parish. Then came many changes: agriculture suffered great depression; some emigrated; others left for farms in the adjacent parishes, and for many years it seemed as though its former glory had departed: though always, there were the faithful few who remained loyal to the Cause; and of those who had gone elsewhere, there were many who became stalwart workers in other Churches—in Exeter, Plymouth, and even in the Metropolis: and one, at least, of her sons, entered the Ministry and carried the Gospel to “the regions beyond.”

Just four bare mud walls, a thatched roof, and no stained glass in the windows: such was the fabric of the old Hittisleigh Chapel. And yet, to my knowledge, there went forth from that unpretentious place, some of the finest Christian characters, saints in homespun, which West-country Methodism has ever produced: and whenever the picture of that plain sanctuary in the glen rises before my memory, I am thrilled at the thought of the mighty works of grace which have been wrought in many such, up and down the Western-land; and at the thought, too, of the vast reach of the work that may open out at any time, from the obscure and apparently unromantic service being rendered in the feeblest of Churches, hidden away in the solitudes of the English countryside. Students of history know how much of England's greatness we owe to the village Hampdens, and the clean strain of our hamlet stock; but only High Heaven can gauge how much the Christian Church owes of its amazing story to the despised Nazareths of man.



The great year in the first half-a-century of the history of the little Church was certainly that of 1845, when came the blessing of a revival, and there were many conversions; and some of those who had been strongly opposed to the Methodists were won over to the Cause, while many signs and wonders were wrought in the name of the Holy Child Jesus. It was the writer's privilege to have known a few of the veterans who had come to their spiritual birth in that revival; and to have learnt from their own lips, sitting at night in the Dartmoor ingle-nooks, the story of those remarkable experiences—experiences that were truly apostolic in their character and import. Strong and fearless men—men inured to hardness in their struggle with Nature on these storm-swept hills—were broken with a sense of their ignorance and sinfulness, and soon became as gentle-hearted as a little child. Women whose life-long drudgery in the homestead and on the land had left them stolid and fatalistic, suddenly found life full of a new splendour and significance. They saw in the eyes of their sires and their sons,

“The light that never was on sea or land,”

and were able to rejoice in their newly found heritage of blessing. And though their journeys to and from the Chapel, of dark nights, were perilous because of the wrathfulness of some, nothing could daunt them; and many of them carried, through a long and arduous life, the light of a great consecration which came to them in that wonderful revival.

The story of the Hittisleigh Chapel affords, too, a striking example of that strange power there is



in little country Churches of revitalization, after even prolonged periods of dearth. Churches are unlike all other institutions, and have in them the enduring life-principle which seems to be denied all other institutions that are not permeated with Religion. It is literally true that

“ Kingdoms rise and wane ;  
But the Church of Jesus constant will remain.”

In a fairly long experience of rural life, I have seen the passing of many of the old-time customs and institutions of our English villages : clubs and guilds, and social organizations of various kinds, have their day and cease to be ; but the persistency of some of the little village Churches, through the most testing vagaries of Time and Change, and through years of great depression, is to me a most amazing feature of village life and a strong evidence of their divine appointment. I have known many instances of Causes that for a quarter-of-a-century or more have been dormant, and apparently doomed to extinction. Yet they have quickened again into newness of life and carried out an aggressive programme that has astonished even their own devotees.

I have known cases where the few discouraged folk have met, almost despairing of success, and taken council together with a view to the closing down of the work ; and yet the little Church has outlived the fears of its own members. The quickening of a solitary soul, or the coming of a new family into the neighbourhood, or the unfair advantage taken, maybe, by the local magnate or

opposing party, has been quite sufficient to stir the embers and set the altar flame alight again ; while the most highly organized efforts to save a village club or institute from extinction have been in vain. And this, too, I have observed, that it is very seldom a village Chapel has been closed, unless the need which called it into being has been met in some other way.

Much of this is true of the subject of this chapter, as the following pages will show. And now I must take the reader to the spot which marks the modern development of the work at Hittisleigh. At the entrance to the hamlet by the road that leads into it from Dartmoor, stands to-day a neat and cheery-looking edifice which, to those who worship there, tells its own story. It has stood there now for some twenty years, and it is a homely and inviting sanctuary, standing in its own enclosure. A large oak tree casts its shadow athwart the entrance and shelters it from the storms. Apart from the school-house, it is the only building of consequence that has risen in the parish for many generations ; for Hittisleigh is still a dreamy place, where men carry on much as their fathers did in the far past. All around are the farms of red clay soil, heavy to work and exacting the maximum of toil from the husbandman who would succeed ; and when first I became acquainted with it, agriculture—like most things else in the parish—was suffering from depression. I, too, came under that depression when for the first time I visited the old Chapel, with its dingy furniture and its few discouraged worshippers ; the antique clock behind the pulpit long since having

ceased to tell the time, as though it also had lost heart, and was holding both its hands upward before its face in a fit of dejection. On the dusty walls were still seen the old candle brackets that did duty in the early Victorian period, and the forms were of the crudest order.

I very soon came to the conclusion that we must either close down or get a move on ; which latter course seemed well-nigh impossible in a generation that had apparently forgotten the glory of the past. That impression remained with me while I was casting about for some signs of a possible advance ; and on the day of the anniversary, New Year Day, 1903, cold and cheerless, we gathered—less than a dozen of us—in the old Chapel for the celebration. The only hopeful feature about it was that there were a few young folk present ; and there, before the proceedings commenced, we sat in the cold and discussed the situation. Death and removals had accounted for nearly all the Old Lights. There was but one present who could reach back in memory to the more prosperous days of the Cause, and he had no encouragement to give. I then communicated to them my dream of a new and more inviting sanctuary, and not so far removed from the homes of the people. Their eyes brightened at the prospect ; but none could see a way to its realization ; for the owners of land in the parish were supposed to be in no way favourable : and the gentleman to whom belonged the site on which I had fixed in my mind, was a pronounced Churchman and the warden of the parish clergyman. •

But while painfully conscious of the difficulties,

they were not adverse to the scheme. Indeed, they were so impressed by it that, there and then, promises of nearly £24 were made, provided a site could be secured. I am not certain that one of the young people present had experienced conversion ; but it was evident later, that their desire to help the work at that time, was the beginning of their Christian experience. They pledged themselves that they would stand by me ; and from that hour I felt a new breath of life had come upon the Cause which had languished so long.

The story of these young people and their promises I told over the Circuit, and everywhere it got home to the hearts of the older folk. They, too, felt the time had come to " arise and build." But what about the site ? How were we to get over that difficulty ? In confidence, we had spotted it ; but we dared not make it known, lest we should defeat the object we had in view. There was only one way we could get around the Churchwarden owner. Years before, a good Providence had thrown him into friendship with one of the Methodist farmers who had lived in the parish, and for whom he had formed the highest regard. It came to us as a sudden inspiration. Here was our medium. Farmer John Dunning was the man to work the oracle for us. So one day he set out with the Circuit Minister to visit his friend, the owner of the property. I shall not forget the occasion, nor the mixed reception we got. For my friend it was most cordial ; for myself, a most formal affair. But it improved on acquaintance ; and, thanks to the tact and the rare vein of humour of my old friend,

before we departed, the atmosphere considerably improved, and we were even invited to take tea with the family. It was great to watch the tactics of my friend, and how with his humour he had worked the spell on our host, until he felt that the psychological moment had come to "pop the question." Talk about the wisdom of the Ancients? It is not "in it" with the cautious, intuitive, and pawkish play of intellect which I have seen among those unsophisticated sons of the soil.

To our great delight we discovered that our prayers were to be answered. The mind of the man we had feared might hinder us, was not unfavourable to our project. Probably never before had a Methodist Minister been in his house; and yet, as a concession to an old friendship, he was pleased to inform us that he was prepared to consider the matter. We then indicated the site we desired, and after some further discussion, he gave us his word that we should have it; and that, too, at a nominal price. Thus I learnt the truth of the old saying, that it is good sometimes to "have a friend at court."

The site having been secured, put vim into the workers, and within three months the dream of long years with some began to come true. Farmers around lent their teams to haul the material, and farm labourers gave their services to clear the site and excavate for the foundations. By the February of 1904 the building was finished; and on the 25th of that month it was opened and dedicated for worship by the President of the Conference in the presence of what was perhaps the largest crowd that

had ever gathered in that lone hamlet. About two hundred and fifty persons were present. They came from all directions, in traps and carriages, on horses and cycles ; and they gave so liberally to the funds that at the close of the day only £90 remained to be raised.

The plans for the building were drawn by an old Chagford boy, the late Mr. Austin of Exeter, and father of Dr. Austin of the China Mission field, who thus left his memorial in the Circuit of his birth. None who were present for the opening services will ever forget the enthusiasm of that day, nor the fine tone which characterized the services ; and best of all, friends of the Anglican fold came and joined us—no small evidence of the beneficent change which had come over the religious life of the West Country since the days when persecution raged in the parish, as we have seen.

In one of his books the late Sam Pollard, the beloved Missionary, writes of the wonderful £5 Chapel which he built in China. That was beyond our endeavours at Hittisleigh : but we had our £5 Chapel there ; for that was the sum we obtained for the freehold of the edifice we had left behind us in the march of progress ; though not without some heart pangs for those of us who were in possession of the story of the wonderful works of grace which had been wrought within those poor walls. But ours was the joy of seeing an almost defunct Church arise, shake herself from the dust, and recapture her lost glory. And what was equally heartening, this success proved contagious, quickened hope in a Circuit that for many a day had seen little



of such work, gave the sister Churches' confidence in themselves, and transformed the whole outlook.

Not long after the dedication of the new Chapel, the great Welsh revival broke out, and the account given in the daily press thrilled the whole country. Into this solitary Devonshire hamlet the influence of the work across the Channel found its way, and both Minister and people felt that the set time to favour Zion had come. We thought what a crowning mercy it would be if only those young people who had given much to build up the material fabric of the Cause, would now give themselves to be built into the living Church of God; and that in several cases happened, three of them becoming Local Preachers. Services were arranged, and night after night the numbers and the power grew. The Minister read the latest news from the Principality, and prayers and pointed appeals led several to the feet of Christ. Night after night we walked that lonely road of three miles between the manse and the little Chapel, the bright stars shining above us, and scarcely feeling the ground under our feet for the joy of the Lord that was in our souls.

My dear faithful collie, which for nearly twelve years accompanied me on my Circuit journeyings, and often formed one of the most orderly members of my congregations—seemed to share the elation of our hearts. Billy Bray once observed that if a man got converted, his horse and his dog would soon get to know of it; and I verily believe that my canine friend was conscious that there was some good thing astir out Hittisleigh way. A great mood came to the hearts of men and women there-

about. And not only were the young people affected ; some of those who were well on in years received the baptism of fire and did splendid service. But the enemy tried to hinder the good work as usual. One poor man, whose wife was devoted to the Cause, was greatly enraged, and threatened that if she continued to attend the services, he would "do for her." But we prayed especially for him ; and at the end of the first week, to our great astonishment, he came with her to the meeting and sat in the back seat, looking the picture of misery. We knew he was under deep conviction, and that the Spirit was working mightily on him ; and ultimately he resolved to join his wife in the heavenly way : so there was rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God that night, and in the hearts of his people at Hittisleigh.

The intervening years have wrought many changes at Hittisleigh ; for Time and Change stand still nowhere this side of the border-line which men call death, and the little Church has known its ups and downs ; but, recently, I revisited the scenes of my former labours, and found the work as prosperous as ever—though many of the familiar forms had vanished, and many who had helped to build the new Chapel had passed on before. No human measure can determine the value of the Hittisleigh contribution to the Kingdom of God ; but in the great Day of final account it will be seen that many a soul was saved through the instrumentality of the Church of the Methodists there, and "it shall be said of this man and that one that he was born there."





## VII

### A BROTHER-MINOR OF THE MOORLAND: EARLY DAYS AND CONVERSION

A knight stood gazing from his castle wall . . .  
His sword and helmet caught the gleaming morn.  
The branching forest stretched beneath, its gloom  
Made bright with life and sunshine of the Spring.  
No stripling knight, he scanned the leafy hills  
And secret haunts of nature all unknown.  
His eye held power, a radiant soul outspoke,  
And dauntless energy.

The sunset came and all the forest slept ;  
And rest re-nerved for solitary tasks ;  
The days in silent march went circling by,  
Across the azure heights to crimson eve,  
And ever through the starry plains the nights  
Advanced ; and spring to summer called,  
And wolfish winter chased the autumn far ;  
And still the knight pursued his lonely round.  
When Nature summoned, laughing at disguise,  
With voice of freedom from the sunlit trees,  
He pushed the postern wide, and strayed to breathe  
In larger solitudes ; the woodland fruits  
He plucked, or roamed far down the rugged steep,  
Or dared a wider range with friendly guard ;  
And flowers and tender creatures knew his hand—

His "Patmos," girded with green seas, where God  
Unveiled new glories—God Who wrought abroad  
New wonders.

WILLIAM STEVENS

## VII

### A BROTHER-MINOR OF THE MOORLAND: EARLY DAYS AND CONVERSION

**I**N one of the loveliest of Dartmoor glens, whose haunts are threaded by a small tributary of the Teign, and not far from the river itself, nestles a snug little farmstead, surrounded by the greenest of meadowlands and oak coppices. A few clumps of tall pines impregnate the life-giving moorland air with their fragrance. The meadows and the sloping fields are pleasant to the eye, for they are seen in contrast to the great rugged hills which hem them in and dwarf them. It is a contrast of cultivated acres and expansive wastes, of wild Nature's solitudes and the sweet comforts of home. The scene is suggestive of man's age-long struggle with the elements for the conquest of the soil.

Long ago, before the coming of Julius Cæsar, primitive man had played a great part in this remote countryside. Within a radius of a mile or so are many remains of that crude civilization of the Stone Age, which affords so much interest to our archæologists—menhirs, hut villages, and sacred circles, which leave no doubt as to the importance of Dartmoor as a centre of human interest back in the dim dawn of history. And on the hilltop overlooking the Teign valley near by are traces of what must have been the primitive

man's factory, a kind of prehistoric Sheffield for the making of his implements of war and industry. The plough hereabout still turns up many a flint knife and arrow-head of that far-distant past, and the flint cores from which they were so laboriously chipped are still seen lying about, as sharp of edge as when those rude hands that wrought them flung them back to the earth as the scrap of their industry.

At last, driven by the merciless storms from off the high lands, the early moorland dwellers drifted down into the combes and valleys, made their clearings, and established their homes where there was less exposure ; learning meanwhile the art of agriculture, which left them less at the mercy of the wild chase, for the sustenance of their lives.

Thus these pleasant meadows came to be. They are the result of long ages of travail and patient toil—a patrimony of no mean worth. In many cases father and son of many generations have toiled together on those Dartmoor holdings, until it may well be said that their progeny is “ raised from the soil.” But the spirit of the wild still haunts them, and only by unremitting toil can the children retain what their fathers so painfully won for them : for old Dartmoor seems to resent the inroads which audacious man has made on his preserves. He still presses his rugged spurs out among the flanking fields, and frowns down from his desolate tors upon the enterprise of man. Eternal vigilance is the price that has to be paid to prevent the reversion to type of those upland fields that form the bordure of the moorland wild.

The glen of our story, with its little farm, is

traversed by a lane with stone walls built of granite boulders gathered from the river-bed or the fields, and now covered with mosses and lichens. Ferns and mosses, dank with the spray flung up from the seething waters, adorn the river banks; and in many a shady bower the angler may find the pool where the grayling thrives. The road into the glen leads over the hilltop, and down a pine copse, to a grey old bridge that carries it across the river, at which point one comes suddenly upon the scene that forms the centre of our story. In the foreground, a slope of green meadowland with a huge pine tree as sentinel; at the back, a low, ambling homestead, half hidden behind a wealth of laurustinus, boxwood, and bay tree; its door ever open to the wayfarer, as I knew it; and the broad hearth sending up its incense of wood and peat fire into the blue. The old home is flanked by a group of giant elms. To the left rises the hill that is crowned with the rugged Kestor: to the right the meadows slant down to the Teign. Close to the house are the "shippen," as the cattle sheds are called in the West; and near at hand is the old mill whose great wheel has ground the corn, and sawn the timber, for some generations of men. Mill and farm were not an infrequent order of things in the West Country, in former days; especially where, as in this case, the farm was not of sufficient acreage to give full-time employment to the farmer and his sons. So in slack times, when the weather was against the work of the fields, or between the seasons, there was always work to be done at the mill.

But this mill, well-nigh half a century ago, was an exceptional one. Could its old grey walls speak, what a story they would have to tell ! Side by side with the most primitive appliances were others of the latest invention. Strange to say, it was one of the first mills in the United Kingdom to have an electric-lighting plant ; as Chagford was one of the first villages in England to be lit by electricity. The splash of the big water-wheel and the creak of the worn wooden cogs were familiar sounds by many a stream in the West Country fifty years ago ; but the hum of the little dynamo that enlivened the air at Yeo Mill was then a strange music " down along." Still, there it was ! and its being there was accounted for by the fact that the little miller of Yeo was a remarkable and an original man. Begotten of good Dartmoor stock, and brought up in the quiet, slow ways of his native heath, he was yet alive in every fibre of his being to every new manifestation of life and human progress, and it is the story of this man that we shall now follow.

William Perryman was born in 1842, of the yeoman breed that has contributed so much to the romance of the fair Devon county and the nation at large. But the Dartmoor farmer is of his own order, with a sturdy independence and a resourcefulness begotten of his struggle with the elemental forces of Nature and his remoteness from the crowded haunts of men. Around Dartmoor the land has still to be cleared of the granite boulders, and the moorland mists and storms render the work of the husbandman much more precarious than it is in the lowlands ; while his harder lot produces a





A GROUP OF CHURCH LEADERS, 1906

MIDDLE ROW (*from right*)—2. THE MILLER. 5. THE AUTHOR. 6. FARMER JOHN. 7. THE CLOCK-DOCTOR



character of patience, endurance, and simple tastes. He can make a living where his lowland neighbours would starve. He has few counter-attractions, and for the most part his work is done in communion with wild Nature: so he has more time to think, and has often a strain of originality that is truly surprising to such as at first become acquainted with him. For him the interests of life are narrowed down; and this narrowing of interests, though it has its drawbacks, has also its compensations. It drives a man in upon himself, and fosters both introspection and close observation of natural phenomena—especially if the man be at all of a philosophic turn of mind. And when, a quarter of a century ago, I first got to know the moormen, there were more original characters on Dartmoor than in any other area of similar dimensions in the kingdom, I should say.

Something of the Dartmoor granite seems to have got into the constitution of these rugged moormen, and something of the mystery and reserve of the wide moorland solitudes. I could see it often in their eyes, and feel it in their hearts. The romance and poetry of the moor were for me consummated in its human children, in their quiet and simple lives, their fancies and superstitions. Their confidence was not easily won; but once obtained, it often yielded astonishing revelations of the simple grandeur of the soul in men. I have discovered some jewelled graces beneath the homespun of a rugged Dartmoor farmer. Some crisis of life or death, some sudden break in the round to which they are accustomed, will often show them at their

best ; and waken wonder at their wealth of spirit, and their sound common sense. It is for this reason that some of our modern writers have explored the humanities on Dartmoor, and found it a land of inspiration and romance.

William Perryman's father was a fair specimen of the pronounced Dartmoor race ; a man somewhat reticent and taciturn, with a strong sense of justice, and with ideas of individual rights which made him a thorn in the flesh to all would-be tyrants of the countryside. With no fear of man in his heart, he struck out his own course ; made for himself a strong position ; and from his own snug little freehold rang the challenge more than once to those who were out to oppress the poor, or to filch the common people of their rights. He was "as good as any lawyer," his neighbours were wont to say ; and there is no doubt he found a delight in taking the rise out of parson and squire, when they gave evidence of overbearing authority.

When first I saw him, seated in his ingle-nook at Yeo, he was a venerable and impressive figure, and nearing the end of his long life-journey ; but strength of mind and purpose still remained to him ; and his leonine face, searching eyes, and well-knit, sturdy frame, bespoke him of Nature's sterner mould. He had blazed his own trail through difficult days, and had no place in his economy for the time-server, the tactician, or the sentimentalist. Straight, and sturdy, he was, without doubt ; but there was a softer side to his nature which those that were intimate with him knew. He had, moreover, an appreciation of education, quite exceptional

for the class to which he belonged, at that time of day ; and was resolved that his son should have whatever advantage could be given him in that line. The mother was a dapper, bright-eyed little woman of a sweeter disposition, whose presence radiated good cheer in the home, and made her greatly beloved of her children.

Their son William, the miller, was an excellent blend of this well-mated couple, and even in his boyhood was keen and observant beyond the average youth. He had also an insatiable thirst for knowledge, and found in reading a delight. There were few facilities for learning for such a lad in the neighbourhood of Chagford at that time. The poor people were for the most part ignorant and helpless, and there were those who looked upon the efforts of any who sought to enlighten the minds of the common people with strong disfavour ; and regarded such as inimical to the interests of the employers of labour. They held that " eddicaäshun had a villed zome vokes' haid wi' all zorts o' nonsense, zo that they wadden any moore gude vor work."

Fortunately for young Perryman, he was born into a home where no such benighted views obtained. His father was keen enough to see what an advantage his few educated neighbours had obtained over the rest of them ; and so he strove hard to give his children such mental equipment as would be good for them. William was sent to the private school which Mr. R. D. Gay had opened at Providence, and afterward on to Shebbear College. The means were not sufficient for a prolonged course there ;

but the youth made good use of his time, and ever afterward spoke in warm appreciation of the start that was given him at that institution.

Providence and Shebbear were indeed consecrated spots to him, and he could never refer to them without a feeling of reverence ; for here it was that he had been brought into contact with those splendid souls who so greatly influenced his young mind and heart, and led him into association with the Church which, in after years, he so deeply loved and so grandly served. Mr. Gay he ever regarded as his father in the Gospel, though his actual conversion he owed to another. And at Shebbear the saintly James Thorne was the governor, while his headmaster was the celebrated Thomas Ruddle, of imperishable memory. For these two leaders of the Church he formed the highest regard, and retained their friendship even unto death.

It was at Shebbear he gained that wider knowledge of Methodism which made him such an impassioned follower of the Wesleys and won him repute in all the Churches. Some of the Ministers who afterward filled a large place in the councils of the denomination were fellow-students of his at Shebbear ; and so, in later life, he had calls for service from various parts of the country, and always rejoiced to respond to them, and at his own expense. Shebbear gave him an ideal of life and service which redeemed all his after years from the mediocre and the mercenary, and made him a true Brother-Minor if ever there was one. Indeed, he was the St. Francis of the moorland, always simplifying his own needs so he might be able to enrich the lives of



others ; and using his business, home, and substance with a free and joyous spirit, to the greater glory of God. And after twenty-five years, on reflection, I am more and more impressed with the strong resemblance which there was between the two characters—the little Dartmoor miller and the joyous saint of Assisi.

From Shebbear, William Perryman returned to the farm and the mill ; and although his parents were still in communion with the Anglican fold, his own heart took him back to the tiny chapel at Providence, and to the little band of devout Methodists in fellowship there. There he listened to their earnest discourses, watched their exemplary lives, and learnt of their spirit ; and although to an inquiring mind like his there were many problems to be faced, and with a keener intellect at work upon them than the simpler folk could know, he was resolved to throw in his lot with them. He was not unconscious of the glamour of the Anglican tradition, though he was seriously disturbed in his mind at the arbitrary methods the Mother Church had too often employed in rural districts, and the sad neglect which had been hers in relation to the spiritual needs of the people and social reforms so long overdue. The fine old Parish Church at Chagford was the Church of his fathers ; but for all the mystic in him, he was intensely practical, and in the Methodist Order he thought he saw a better means of getting the work of the Kingdom done : that settled the issue for him.

Having so far taken this definite step, young Perryman was soon to find that great experience

which has always counted for so much in the heart of Methodism—Conversion. For some time his mentality had influenced him in the direction of these people who were taking religion so seriously, and getting things done in the locality; but he sometimes found it difficult to interpret the experiences of which the Methodist preachers spoke; and could not let himself go absolutely. He would listen to the discourses and turn them over in his mind; yet always there was one thing lacking. The great illumination came to him at last, as to so many others, in a period of spiritual revival. The Rev. William Beer, who had recently been appointed to the Circuit, was led to conduct mission services in the neighbourhood, and their influence was so powerful that the countryside responded, and there were many conversions.

The works of grace which young Perryman then witnessed profoundly impressed him, and a little later, under the influence of a gifted and godly young Minister, Alfred Fleming Meager, for whom he had conceived a great affection, Perryman passed into the new life of the Spirit. Meager, who came of a good Cornish family, and was a young man of refinement and great promise, died at Torquay shortly afterward; and Perryman thereafter ever regarded it as his life work to fill up for God and man the service which his beloved friend had so early been called to leave. Forty years after, the tears would come to his eyes, and a tremor into his voice, whenever reference was made to his long-lost friend. It seemed as though the spirit of the departed was ever in close touch with him, and



he shared to the full the sentiment of Tennyson's beautiful lines :

“What art thou then? I cannot guess ;  
But tho' I seem in star and flower  
To feel thee some diffusive power,  
I do not therefore love thee less :  
My love involves the love before ;  
My love is vaster passion now ;  
Tho' mixed with God and Nature thou,  
I seem to love thee more and more.  
Far off thou art, but ever nigh ;  
I have thee still, and I rejoice ;  
I prosper, circled with thy voice ;  
I shall not lose thee, tho' I die.”

One who still remains to us from those far, happy days, has recalled for us their splendour as young Perryman knew them. She tells of one who had been a great sinner, a man of advanced years, who was converted in the same revival and became a glorious character. The common experience had drawn these two souls together, the old moorman and the young miller ; and often, as they went their homeward way together, she would hear them singing out of their gladness of heart, the simple revival hymns ; their voices ringing out on the clear moorland air in the silence of the night. “Never,” writes she, “shall I forget standing at the gateway opposite the little chapel and watching the funeral procession of the old moorman Endacott, wending its way down by Creber pond and singing as they walked,

‘They are gathering homeward from every land,  
One by one ;  
And their weary feet touch the shining strand,  
Yes, one by one.’”

An interesting glimpse this of the early days of Perryman's Christian pilgrimage. Both moorman and miller have long since gone to their rest, and their ashes lie in the little cemetery at Providence, to which the latter helped to carry so many others with whom he had shared the hope of Immortality.

Perryman's experience of conversion left him in no doubt as to the glorious reality of that work of grace in the soul of the believer. He would himself sum it all up in those magnificent lines of Wesley's :

" Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
Fast bound in sin and Nature's night ;  
Thine eye diffused the quickening ray,  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light ;  
My chains fell off, my heart was free :  
I rose, went forth, and followed thee."

And it was an experience to hear him give out that verse when he was conducting the service sometimes. How those wonderful eyes of his would fill with light, and with what dramatic force would he reproduce the awakening and emancipation of the new-born soul ! with the emphasis on those last lines that left no doubt as to his own rapt experience of them. The wonder and charm of that first hour of his spiritual life had never left him, nor had the altar-fire ever gone out.

His eyes now open to the wonderful possibilities of life, Perryman began to lay in the groundwork of that amazing store of information which in after years made him a delightful conversationalist, and stood him in such good stead as a public speaker. To his alert young mind everything came as grist to the mill, to use a figure from his own vocation.

Literature, history, and the sciences made a great appeal to him ; and he soon became far and away the best informed man in the Circuit. He early formed a high conception of the Pastoral office, and honoured for their work's sake the Ministers who were appointed to the Circuit. He rejoiced in their companionship, and often acknowledged in later life how much he was indebted to them for the blessing and guidance of his early years. It was not surprising, therefore, that he soon came to feel a desire to declare to others the Good News that had done so much for him.



VIII

A BROTHER-MINOR OF THE MOOR-  
LAND: PREACHER, TEACHER,  
AND PRACTICAL MAN

Life, full life,  
Full flowered, full fruited, reared from homely hearth ;  
Rooted in duty, and through long calm years  
Bearing its load of healthful energies ;  
Stretching its arms on all sides ; fed with dews  
Of cheerful sacrifice, and clouds of care,  
And rain of useful tears ; warmed by the sun  
Of calm affection, till it breathes itself  
In perfume to the heavens—this is the prize  
I hold most dear.

SIR LEWIS MORRIS.

## VIII

### A BROTHER-MINOR OF THE MOORLAND: PREACHER, TEACHER, AND PRACTICAL MAN

**I**N 1863, when he was of the age of twenty-two, Mr. Perryman's name first appeared on the Circuit plan as a Local Preacher. His first appointment was at Challacombe, a tiny hamlet in the heart of the moor, where he discoursed for about twenty minutes and gave proof of his ability to preach. Within a few months he was known over the Circuit as a young man of promise in that vocation, and his visits were anticipated with considerable interest. Before his conversion, he had shown great interest in the art of preaching, and had often turned his critical mind on to the preacher's style and his treatment of the message. He was now to have his own long turn at the sacred task; and capable as he was in so many ways, it was as a preacher that the real greatness of the man was disclosed. He was a true master of assemblies, with a wide range of thought and a wonderful flow of language.

In his mature years his scientific knowledge and his large acquaintance with books enabled him to draw his illustrations, which were always of an illuminating character, from sources entirely beyond the reach of the majority of Lay Preachers in the



West Country. In lucid and homely phrasing he was able to make plain to others what had passed through the crucible of his own mind. Words were like magic to him : he would string them together in the most interesting fashion ; and he had a fine sense of their values and shades of meaning. And the right adjective was never wanting. Fast as the thought moved through his brain, the words to clothe it were at his command. Other than fixing on the Text and getting a concise outline, he did little preparation, so called. For the rest he trusted largely to his general reading and the inspiration of the hour. His close observation of Nature, love of mechanics, and his own rich experience of life, were his stock-in-trade ; and it seemed as though it wanted but the hour and the audience to bring it all into play.

Mr. Perryman was himself a magnetic centre of thought and influence. He held his environment responsive to his own live spirit. It was literally true of him, as William Morris has so beautifully said of Wordsworth :

" The Spring-time played  
About him, and the Mighty Morning shone."

He was, in fact, a man who carried a whole environment of his own with him : and certain it is that he brought within reach of others realms of fresh thought and inspiration. There are those who tell us of an astral body which reaches out beyond our physical frame and is charged with a strange, magnetic power. Some such power there certainly was in the person of the Dartmoor miller-philosopher ; for it radiated life and good cheer.

However stagnant things were in a gathering, as soon as he appeared they were galvanized into newness of life. There was a touch of the electric in him which seemed to form a circuit of its own and set the whole company on good terms with each other. The frigid and conventional element soon yielded to the warmth of his touch, and cold formalism had in him a deadly enemy.

And this was a great quality of his preaching. As soon as he announced the hymn at the commencement of the service, the spell began to work. There was a ring of cheer, a thrill of breezy optimism in his voice and manner, which made one feel—even on a dreary Winter morning—that it was really a joyous thing to be alive. The preacher's heart and imagination went into every word he said.

More than once I have been electrified by his reading of the first lines of some familiar hymn which, from its very familiarity, had lost something of its appeal. Was it Doddridge's Bethel hymn?

“ O God of Bethel, by Whose hand  
Thy people still are fed,  
Who through this weary pilgrimage  
Hast all our fathers led ” :

then how joyously did he render it. One could feel instinctively that the preacher was thinking in pictures—Jacob's golden dream, the vision of the fathers replenished by the unfailing grace of God, and the long procession of the Church down the ages: all this he made us see with that strong visionary soul of his. I can hear even now the inflexions of the voice, and the full emphasis on that last word of the second line which almost

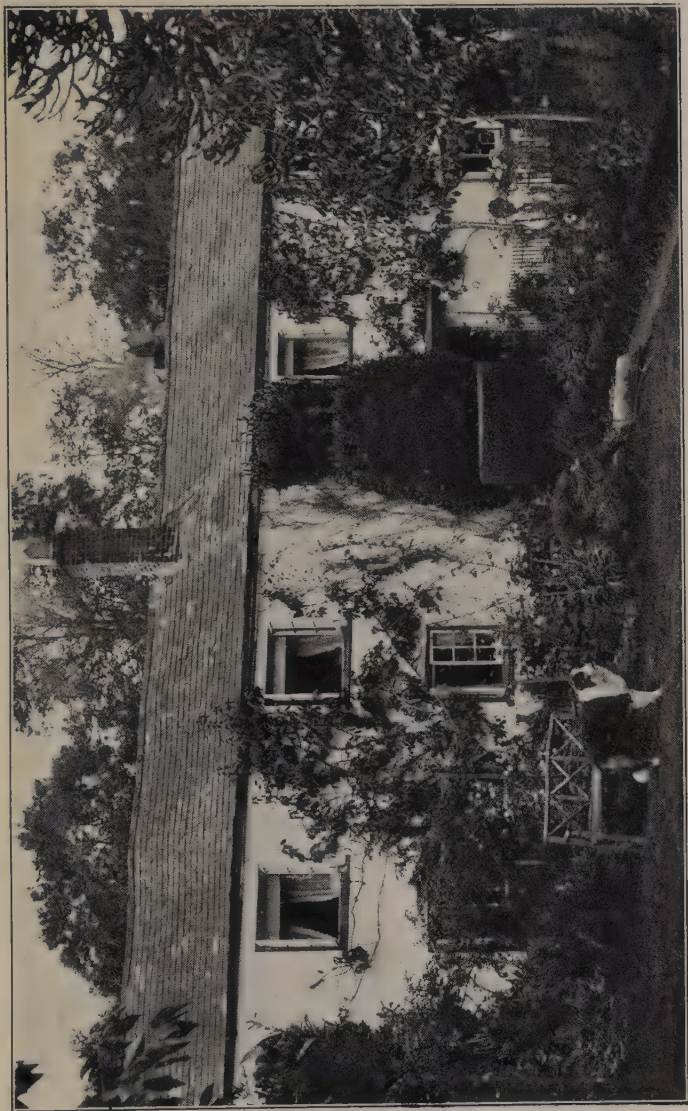
turned it into a dissyllable for sheer confidence in the goodness of the Lord.

Then, too, the prayer : how natural it was, how it lifted, and quickened, and brought the Eternal real to us. For reading the Scriptures few could excel him, and it irritated him to hear them read in any formal and monotonous manner. He saw so much in them that he marvelled any one could read them tamely or without emotion. More than once he spoke to me about the majestic music of the great passages in the old Prophecies and some of the Epistles, which would seem to carry him away. I have heard familiar verses ring a fresh meaning as they came from his lips. The Word with him was never a mere reading of History nor an experience of the past ; but the reflection of what is ever alive, and striving, and forceful in the great throbbing heart of Humanity ; a mighty and unfaltering response to the deepest cravings in the soul of man the wide world over.

His knowledge of the Bible was exceptional ; though he had no narrow interpretation of its message, and pitied the people whose dry literalism and pedantic treatment of it robbed it of half its splendour. But his belief in its foundation truths was abounding. He was quite sure that, as far as man's deepest need is concerned,

"None but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good."

The Prophets of the Old Testament made a great appeal to him, for they were of his own order ; especially in their denunciations of luxurious living and their insistence on national righteousness as



THE HOME OF THE BROTHER-MINOR



the foundation of all true progress and prosperity. Though he was patriotic to the core and revelled in the great records of his country, he was wrathful at the policy which provoked the South African War, and did not hesitate so to express himself. As a man of peace and a preacher of the Gospel of Goodwill, he was often distressed at the vast expenditure on armaments, and on many an occasion publicly protested against it.

Mr. Perryman was a great reader. Books were his constant companions, and as they accumulated, he built for them a library on the lawn in front of his house; which also served him as an office for his business. That chamber was in itself a true indication of the mind of the man whose sanctum it was. The observer would see at once that Religion was the chief concern of that office; for the walls were lined with books of Christian apologetics, sermons, and biography; while there was generally a well-thumbed Bible on the office desk: for there it was that in the intervals of business he prepared his sermons and got the groundwork of those remarkable speeches which he delivered over the countryside on so many various occasions. Scattered among the religious books were books of science and technical works that seemed strangely out of place there in that solitary Dartmoor haunt. But they had been well perused, and had furnished many an illustration for some Scriptural subject.

The coming of *The British Weekly* was an event of the week at that secluded home by the mill, and *The Christian World* also shared his interest. A review of any book that appealed would be followed



at once by a letter to the publishers with an order for the same. And now and again the friends who had shared his hospitality, and delighted in his communion at Yeo, would send him along a volume which they thought would interest him. He gloried in the sermons of Robertson of Brighton, W. L. Watkinson, and Dr. J. H. Jowett; and was among the first to appreciate the wonderful qualities of the works of Dr. Alexander Whyte of Edinburgh. Henry Drummond made a great impression on him. The scientific method as applied to religion was of peculiar interest to him, though he never regarded science as big enough to range all life. He was too much of a mystic for that.

But it was the Bible, of all books, that claimed him. I have known him come in from the fields or the mill, in the heat of the day, and go at once to the good old Book and read a passage—no doubt, because some text had been calling to him when he was at his task. And at night, when family prayers were being followed, I have heard him make the most original comments on the passage read, and light up with that rich humour of his some turn in the story of a Bible character. He was never good at remembering chapter and verse; but in conversation he could always call up an apt passage of Scripture when he wanted it. The Parables of our Lord he often spoke of with deep wonder at their profound knowledge of the human heart, and their concise setting of the great truths of the Kingdom; and he would preach on them with marked effect.

Mr. Perryman was in every way a man of liberal

mind, and as a Liberal in politics he was a recognized leader in his district. The injustice of the Balfour Education Act filled him with indignation ; for he had made a study of the Education Question, and had watched with admiration the splendid work of the Board Schools in the West from their very inception. He had himself served for many years as clerk to the local School Board, and could but regard the new policy as a veiled attack on the Free Churches in the rural districts. So with might and main he entered into the fray, and had no small part in the great Liberal victory which afterward swept the country. The strong Puritan element in him revolted against all forms of tyranny, and he had the greatest admiration for the late Dr. Clifford and his work through those testing years.

No doubt it was his wide reading that delivered him from the intolerant and narrow view of things that often obtained in rural districts, even among those of his own communion : and his fine gift of humour, and sound practical sense, made him greatly respected even by his opponents. From his own experience of life he had come to look always for the best in men, and to deal with their faults with charity ; unless such faults came of deliberate and organized evil—such as that of the drink traffic and the gambling curse. At these he flamed with indignation against the men who were gathering wealth at the expense of the Nation's good and the sufferings of many innocent victims. Such was the man as I knew him in his prime—by Nature's mould, the adornment of divine grace, and the development which comes of an unselfish and dutiful



life. And this it was that gave such weight to his public utterances.

His sermons were not all of equal merit ; but they were generally good, and often racy and original to a marked degree. Thinking out his own subjects and treating them in his own interesting fashion, I do not wonder he so impressed the visitors who came to hear him. " I have been and heard your Mr. Perryman preach to-night, and it was a wonderful discourse," said a cultured and able London preacher to me. " He dealt with the parable of ' The Seed Growing Secretly,' and his three leading ideas were well conceived and worked out in a most original and striking manner. He is a great man, and it has been a delightful service." As is well known, some years before, Sir W. Robertson Nicoll had visited the neighbourhood, and on the Sunday he spent there he attended three services in Chagford. In the morning, at the Wesleyan Church, he had heard a Minister preach a thoughtful, well-prepared sermon, which partly pleased and partly disappointed him. Later he heard the sermon in the Parish Church by the Vicar ; but the service depressed him. Then, as " Claudius Clear," he writes :

" There is only one other dissenting place of worship in Chagford—the Bible Christian Chapel—and I went there in the evening. It was even smaller than the Wesleyan Chapel, and was also well attended, mostly by young people. A Local Preacher in a tweed suit occupied the pulpit, and spoke from the words, ' He hath appointed a day in which

He will judge the world in righteousness by that man Whom He hath ordained.' It was an extremely pointed and telling discourse on the Judgment and the Judge. The preacher devoted himself to bringing out the fitness of both. It was fit there should be a judgment : after all the efforts at judgment made on earth by God and man, a great sum of wrong remains. It was fit that Jesus should be the Judge : no one knew so much of life : no one sympathized with it so deeply. It was urged in conclusion that no appeal would be carried past the sentence of the Judge. It was final. . . . The ablest, the freshest, the most impressive sermon I heard in Chagford was that preached by a layman in the Bible Christian Chapel."

From such an authority, that was a tribute which would have honoured any layman ; but the layman concerned, who preached in the little Chapel, in a tweed suit, was my noble friend, William Perryman. I once referred to this in his presence, and he said, " Yes, I remember the occasion quite well. I talked away, you know, in my own fashion, and didn't know any one special was there." " Do you realize," I observed, " that you won an encomium which many a first-rate preacher would value ? " " Ah, well," he replied, " I am very glad for the sake of my people, if that is so." From various parts of the Connexion he received messages of congratulation ; for the leaders all knew there was only one man in that part of the country that would answer to the description of Claudius Clear.

In the pulpit, Mr. Perryman's gestures spoke as eloquently as his words. His face would light up

at times with a fine radiance. His hands and fingers would reach out into space like so many antennæ feeling for the ether wave of the Spirit ; for there was so much around him that he felt he wanted to get hold of and transmit to his less sensitized hearers. He saw, felt, and grasped, much that was not dreamt of in the average man's philosophy. This strong, psychological temperament of his made him a true mystic, and flashes of mysticism would come out in his sermons. Divine immanence was a truth very dear to him. He shared also Wordsworth's idea of Nature :

" For 'tis my view that every flower  
Enjoys the air it breathes."

The adaptation of things in Nature filled him with wonder and delight, and very simple joys satisfied him. Especially would he dwell on the stored treasures of the earth for the service of man : the coal-fields with their " bottled sunshine," the electric forces of the earth and air, the stones for building, and the different ores for their manifold uses. Most things seemed to serve him as symbols of spiritual truth. One day he took me up into the dynamo-room of the old mill to see the electric plant, one of the earliest in Devon. " Ah ! " he observed, " that little dynamo has taught me many a lesson. Look ! here is one of them " ; and, taking his soft felt hat in his hand, he placed a handful of iron nails in it : then, taking a steel chisel about a foot long, he put the point of the chisel among the nails, and held the head of the tool near the casing of the dynamo. The nearer he moved the chisel, the greater was the magnetic power of it on the

nails, until nearly the whole of them were caught up and held suspended above the hat. Then, as he drew it farther and farther away, the nails dropped off, one after another, until all had fallen. I watched him; wondering what he was going to make of it. A moment he remained silent. Then he turned to me and said, "What a lesson for those of us who preach the Gospel, to live near the heart of the Gospel! And, moreover," said he, "this I have noticed too, that when the casing is covered with dust and dirt from the mill, it does not transmit so effectively."

Ah, well! I need not enlarge on it. But what a comment on that searching passage, "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord"!

"I used to wonder," he once said to me, "why the Lord took so much trouble with poor old Peter, to send him to preach to Cornelius. I used to think it would have been so much more direct for Him to have sent an angel to Cæsarea. But then, of course, no angel could have delivered Peter's message; for what can angels know of Redemption? It takes a sinner—a sinner saved by grace—to preach the Gospel of Redeeming Love." Of all his preaching, he might have said with Sir Lewis Morris:

"Yet deep within my being still I kept  
Two sacred fires alight through all the strife—  
Faith in a living God, faith in a soul  
Dowered with an endless life."

But neither the preacher nor his sermons could be reduced to cold print: they were too vital, and too elusive for that. Only those who heard the

little, live man could have any adequate impression of him or them. As a matter of fact, he wrote very little. His outlines were of the baldest order. The following, however, was found among his earlier notes :

“ The feeling is universal that as men retire to rest at night, after the toils of the day, so do they rest in the grave after the toils and conflicts of life ; and many even look forward to that as the only rest they are ever likely to get, from toil, pain, and poverty, and anxiety. There is a longing for rest in many weary hearts that leads them to anticipate the rest of the grave with resignation, and even to welcome it. But to escape the unpleasant necessities incidental to our human lot should not be our chief concern. Some even look for annihilation ; but, alas ! how few give such serious attention to this matter as the case demands.

“ This life is but the preface to a book—a short trial to an apprenticeship.”

“ We read of many important hours in the Bible : Creation, when the Morning Stars sang together ; and when the sun was first lit up ; when the cherubim were placed at the gate of Eden ; when the door of the Ark was shut : but these hours saw the beginnings of things. But the hour before us closes all things mortal. Hours in your life have been important—birth, special providences, marriage, conviction, conversion. The hour of death will be solemn ; but the hour of resurrection will be more solemn still. The Resurrection will bring all types of character together, face to face : the injured and the injurers, the seduced and the seducer, the

murderer and the murdered. What a gathering ! ”

His preaching appointments seldom left him a free Sunday. The call of the Churches was insistent and his services were always in demand. The seven Churches of the Chagford Circuit looked upon him as a father in God ; and others beyond his own were served as he had opportunity, for his was the spirit of true Christian catholicity. Week nights were frequently given up to special meetings of various kinds. He probably filled the chair more frequently than any other layman in the Connexion, being occasionally called into the big towns of the West for that purpose. The little Dartmoor miller on his shapely bay pony, “ Gyp,” was for a number of years one of the most familiar sights on the roads of his native heath.

Unlike most laymen, Mr. Perryman kept a record of all his texts and services, with the journeys involved ; and by his sixtieth year he had travelled to and from his appointments many thousands of miles. Often he represented his District at the annual Conference, and was known to all the Ministers. For years his home, for many of them, served as a home of rest, when they were broken in health ; and they were warmly welcomed whenever they came. In this service—as in all others—he was supported by his devoted wife, whose motherly care is gratefully remembered by a host of friends. It mattered not who they were ; if only they were the Lord’s servants, or in need—the shelter of that hospitable roof-tree was theirs ; and all over the country there are still those who have happy



memories of summer sunshine amid the green meadows of Yeo, or of unforgettable evenings in that spacious chimney-corner by the cheery log fire. I have a notion that there is not another hearth on Dartmoor which has known a wider range of subjects. What philosophies, spiritual communings, and conversations, have enhanced that homely hearth, some few of us still recall.

Mr. Perryman, when first I was introduced to him, was about sixty years of age ; but he was as nimble of body and mind as any schoolboy, and hard work of any kind was still a very joy to him. I see him now, as when he first stepped into my life—a little, sprightly man, with not one ounce of spare flesh on his well-knit frame ; as upright as a line, and his magnificent head set firm on those square shoulders of his. His long flowing beard gave him a touch of the venerable, and every feature spoke of a strong and capable mind. His eyes were wonderful ! I have never seen their like. They were light in colour, and there were strange deeps of soul in them. They had ever a far-away look, and seemed to see right through and beyond one. His movements were quick and decisive : so it was well that he had great soundness of judgment. That first meeting made a great impression on me : I knew that I had established contact with the spirit of a remarkable man, a live soul, a sensitive medium of psychic and metaphysical forces ; and my first impression never betrayed me.

It was strange to see a little man of his intellectual calibre turning his hand to heavy tasks that would have taxed the brawniest sons of toil ; yet he



delighted in them. He was one of the most resourceful of workers, and was always devising some means for the better working of the farm and the mill, and even carried his ingenuity into devices for lightening the burden of the women's work in the home. Some of his land had never been cleared of the large boulders and rocks that prehistoric eruptions had flung up through the loamy soil. Many of them were scores of tons in weight, and the old man thought twice before tackling them. Through long ages the plough-team had worked around them, and the crops had grown thin about them, because there was no deepness of earth where they stood. To shift them was strenuous toil indeed. Yet this was his self-imposed task for spare hours between the regular business.

Often have I seen that slender form of his poised on those rocks, driving the heavy steel drill into the granite vitals, to take the charge which was to blow it to pieces. One day I remonstrated with him that this was a task for heavier men than he, and that he ought not to follow it. He smiled, and assured me that he got real pleasure out of it. Such pleasure, I found, came of the fact that his philosophical mind was playing upon the task. "You see," said he, "I like doing this, because I look upon it as a bit of pioneer work. Nobody has attempted this before, and it is something that will make the work easier for all who will come after me. I often think of the poor animals that have had to turn and turn about these obstacles, and the ploughmen too, when they might have gone straight forward." And then he quoted to

me Cobden's saying, that the man was a public benefactor who could make two blades of grass grow where before there was only one.

On another occasion, I came upon him at the same task. It was at the time of the Education controversy, in the early 'Nineties. "Well, what are you up to now?" said I. "Oh," he replied, "I am going to blow up the Establishment. You see, many a time I and others have had to come here and clean up the briars and the couch that persist in growing about the old boulders, but with no lasting effect, for they work their roots so far in under the rocks that there is no getting rid of them save by clearing away the rock itself. So I am now going for the RADICAL treatment of the trouble. I am going to put some powder into the business and blow up the Establishment. By which, as you will have perceived, I am speaking in a parable. The one way to get rid of some of our vexed problems is, in my opinion, to disestablish the Church; for I hold that the Church is greatly impoverished by the unholy alliance with the State. There are many weeds of discord and worldliness that have their roots well under the Establishment, and to get rid of those weeds we must blow up that rock."

It was strange that a man of his mystical turn should have had such a keen interest in science, and especially in all kinds of mechanism. He loved to follow the inner workings of things, and any delicate piece of machinery would fascinate him and send him off into something like a rhapsody of admiration. He would point out the special

features of it, and speak in glowing terms of the patience and skill of the men who—one after another—had “put their brains into it” and brought it to perfection. The coming of the electric light into the neighbourhood was a wonderful event to him; and, if I mistake not, he was the first farmer who secured a dynamo of his own and lit up his home, the mill, and even his cattle-sheds with it. He had read in *The Daily News* of a wonderful invention of Tangye Brothers of Birmingham, in the form of a pulley for lifting heavy weights; and immediately sent an order for one with a letter which awakened the interest of the head of the firm and led to a correspondence with him. And when Sir Richard Tangye published his interesting book on Cromwell, my friend was one of the first to receive a copy of it.

The huge locomotives that traversed the West Country for the Great Western Railway particularly interested him. I once heard him say he loved to stand and watch them sweep into the station, with their long trail of coaches. He thought they were so majestic in their motion, and such a splendid evidence of the triumph of human skill. He would talk of the great engineers and bridge-builders, and the way they were literally fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy of the levelling of the hills and the exalting of the valleys. And in all this he saw the promise of man's complete conquest over the elements of Nature.

Mr. Perryman, as may have been gathered, had a lively sense of humour, with him the overflow of a magnanimous and cheerful spirit. One could not

be dull in his company. It mattered not what might have gone wrong, he always made the best of it, and often saw the humorous side of a situation that, for others, seemed to have only a sombre one. He seemed to me to have the child's communion with the glad and happy things in Nature. The song of the birds, the sparkle of the clear moorland streams, the light that everywhere scintillated from the granite quartz about him, were of the genius of his own gladsome nature. He could not understand the morbid type of man to whose jaundiced eyes all Nature was "red in tooth and claw"; though deep reflection had left him as conscious as most men of the mighty travail of the natural world. The evidences of that travail were all around him in the rugged Dartmoor country. Here, if anywhere, the marks of her conflict could be seen

"In scarpèd rock and quarried stone";

for the granite beds showed in their conglomerate nature the terrific fires that must have produced them, and the mighty clefts in the hills, through which the Teign flowed down to the sea, spoke of the cyclopean forces that had contended for the mastery there. He had seen the sheep smitten by the lightning, and the pine-tree shattered by the thunderbolt; yet, for him, all these were far outweighed by the evidences of the divine and providential order which teemed about him; and he loved to recall that grand passage of St. Paul's which—taking stock of Nature's mighty travail—yet sees it as but a process making for a glorious consummation—a complete redemption of the

whole universal order as the result of the Atonement. And this calm trust in the divine order enabled him to find a joy in living, and in the world about him.

He loved the droll wit of his moorland folk, and took much delight in reading the humorous stories that were then being published concerning them. He would sometimes read them in dialect at public gatherings. Busy man as he was, he was a splendid correspondent, and would often sit down and write to some friend or another of an amusing incident or a good story that had come his way. His letters were lit up with flashes of pleasantry, and were most conversational in style. To his daughter who had asked that his next letter may be a LONG one, he at once replied on two strips of margin cut from *The Daily News*, about five feet in length. This he completely covered with his neat handwriting, giving such account of the local doings as would be likely to interest the child. To a friend named Ware, who was recovering from an illness, he wrote :

“ DEAR MR. WARE,—I was not *aware* that you *were* so ill, until I was *where* Mr. and Mrs. C—— *were*. I was sorry to hear that you had been and still *were* so very ill. . . . The *wear* and tear of life come heavily upon some, notwithstanding one's efforts to be-*ware* of colds, and troubles of that sort. Suffering comes down on us sometimes like waters over a *weir*.

“ I don't know if you are yet able to *wear* your everyday boots as you *were* in the habit of doing when our mutual friends *were* accustomed to look in upon you *where* you

*were* attending to your business. . . . David said, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted'; but it takes a lot of enjoyment out of life, for I perceive that a piece of classical music by a military band is scarcely appreciated by one who has a decent little toothache; and an invitation to dine with the King would not be a high compliment to one who was suffering from a bilious attack. But I sincerely hope you are better by now, and that the balmy air, and the flowers, and the sunshine, and the melodies of the sky we are soon to have, may work a complete rejuvenation of your physical frame, and enable you again to resume your activities in Church and State. . . .

"Accept my best wishes for you in soul, body, and estate. Aye! and for every one belonging to you! Kind regards.—Yours faithfully,  
WM. PERRYMAN."

Such letters as this must have gone, hundreds of them, from that little office-library on lonely Dartmoor; for he regarded it as a religious duty to write to his friends when any care or sorrow came upon them; and only the angels can know how many broken in mind, body, and spirit have been refreshed by the sympathetic touch of this gentle, breezy spirit of the St. Francis of the Moor. On more than one occasion, I saw him watching, with a child's glee, the little lambs frisking in the meadows. This, and the way of a hen with her chickens, he told me he regarded as the most moving and beautiful sights in Nature.

I remember one day walking with him in the fields, and we came across two of his horses rubbing



each other in the most friendly fashion. He pulled me up, as his face wreathed in smiles, and observed, "There ! isn't that lovely ! " For horses he had a great admiration, and often spoke of their shapely form, their wonderful sagacity, and their faithful service for man ; and he would put his arms lovingly round the neck of his dear old " Gyp " who had carried him so many thousands of miles over the moorland, and the little animal would rub his head against his master's side, in proof that he, too, had joined the Mutual Admiration Society. He once remarked that, to him, " one of the most horrible things about war was the way the beautiful horses were dragged into the wretched squabbles of men." Surely the animals never had a more faithful friend than he. Once, when he was speaking to me of the sufferings of the animal creation, in consequence of the Fall of Man, I repeated to him those beautiful lines of Burns, from his poem " To a Field-mouse " :

" I'm truly sorry man's dominion  
Hath broken Nature's social union,  
And justified that ill opinion  
Which makes thee startle  
At me, thy poor earth-born companion,  
And fellow mortal."

Strange to say, he had not met with them before, and was greatly moved by them ; for they summed up his own feeling exactly.

There are those whose sentiment will run riot over a poodle or a pet cat, who yet can watch unmoved the cruel sufferings of a child and the privations of the poor. Not such was my beloved friend. The splendid work of the orphanages



greatly appealed to him, and many a gift went from Yeo to the coffers of such institutions. Müller's work at Bristol he often referred to in his public utterances ; and for many years he made it a practice to take one of the boys whenever he required an apprentice ; and under his influence more than one of them found Christ and achieved success in life—of which, more in another chapter.

Mr. Perryman always held himself ready to serve the visitors who came to the moor. He would, whenever possible, leave his work to show them the more interesting features of the neighbourhood—if only he were impressed with a genuine interest on their part. In this way he came into contact with some celebrated people—of whom Dr. Clifford was one—and gained, as he would say, some rare experiences. When a representative of Lady Stanley, the widow of the great African explorer, came to the moorland in quest of the huge granite boulder that was to serve as a memorial, it was my friend who piloted him over the district and pointed out the rock that was ultimately taken ; and from her Ladyship he afterward received a letter of grateful thanks, and an autographed portrait of Stanley, which he greatly prized.

Such was the man as I knew him in the 'Nineties : a true child of Nature, with the soul of a prophet, a humble follower of the Master, and the choicest of friends. When I left him for another sphere of labour, I thought he would be spared for long years of service, but the end of his earthly bourne was nearer than I had dreamt.

**I X**

**A BROTHER-MINOR OF THE MOOR-  
LAND : LAST YEARS AND CLOSING  
SCENES**

Good-bye : no tears nor cries  
Are fitting here, and long lament were vain.  
Only the last low word be softly said  
And the last greeting given above the dead ;  
For soul more pure and beautiful our eyes  
Never shall see again.

J. W. MACKAIL.

## I X

### A BROTHER-MINOR OF THE MOORLAND : LAST YEARS AND CLOSING SCENES

THE story of the Dartmoor miller and his consecrated life must now be drawn to a close. Time in its flight takes from us the noble and the true, as well as the ignoble and the unreal ; and the older we grow, the less of real interest this transitory world holds for us ; while heaven seems more real and homely to us as, one by one, the souls with whom we have held communion here pass from our ken into the kingdom of the Eternal. There are losses that leave us greatly impoverished, and gaps that are not easily filled ; as when dear ones drop out of the ranks and leave us to march on alone. But, thank God ! such losses are not without compensation. The beloved forms vanish ; but, in the faith of Christ, the vital essence remains in the hearts of the friends who survive. As that fine old mystic, Dr. Pulsford, has said :

“ What God takes from us it is always gain to lose. He gives back to us our friends more deeply, tenderly, and sacredly, after they have been taken from us by death. The intimacy before death pertains more to the flesh and the senses ; and after death, to the soul and the inmost affections. It is as though God gave them to us out of His

own bosom, with the holiness and the fragrance of the Divine Nature added to them.

“By death they become too chaste, too heavenly for our lighter moods. . . . They visit us only in our holier moments. They act upon us as motives to prayer, and watchfulness, and retirement of spirit. . . . As our Lord before His death was WITH the disciples, and afterward IN them; so our holiest friends help us more when they are put out of the flesh and are no more seen.”

And this is assuredly true of the passing of William Perryman.

It was in the early Autumn of 1907 I first heard that my friend had been taken ill. For some weeks before he had complained of failing strength: notwithstanding, he kept on with his work. Active to the last degree of strength that remained to him, he had gone as the representative of the Exeter District to the Bible Christian Conference at Portsmouth in July, that never-to-be-forgotten gathering which marked the ninety-second anniversary of his Denomination, and rang down the curtain on one of the most romantic stories of modern Church history. Amid scenes charged with profound emotion, the leaders had gathered to wind up affairs, and to vote themselves into the larger communion of the United Methodist Church constituted by the Act of Union of 1907. To many of the veterans it was a soul-stirring experience, and a tremendous venture of faith, to cast that vote which closed a century of divine romance that had thrown its spell about them. It meant the loss of

a name which—while they had not themselves chosen it—enshrined for them all their most sacred memories.

The Bible Christian Church was small numerically ; but it had ever been characterized by a fine spirit of Evangelism, and had wonderfully justified its existence ; and its very limitations had fostered in the hearts of its people an intensive love of the Cause. It is certain that no Church ever developed more of the family feeling. All the Ministers and leading laymen were well known to each other. The annual Synods and Conferences were as family gatherings, if ecclesiastical Courts ; and the renewal of old friendships was a means of intensifying the spiritual life of the Church. The leaders knew that never again could these old experiences be theirs. The larger Communion would mean a larger Conference, and they, being the least of the contracting parties, would be but a small minority. It speaks well for the spiritual quality of these men, that they were ready, in the greater issue which confronted them, to sacrifice thus their most cherished traditions for the sake of the Unity of the Body of Christ, and follow the divine Spirit out into the larger reaches of the divine purpose.

But this was not to be done without a tremendous tug at the heart-strings ; and so the closing scenes were bedimmed with many tears. A quiver came into many a voice ; strong men wept, and some of the brethren, looking into each others' eyes, could find no words to speak ; and when they parted, it was with the knowledge that they were never so to meet again. The old family feeling must pass,

and a new Church consciousness had to be developed ; and that would take more time than many of them had left on earth.

The life of the Spirit had come as a tidal wave and swept the three Churches into one ; and that wave had wiped out many a landmark by which they had been wont to take their bearings in the deepest things of life. They well understood that it was in accordance with the mind of the Master, and therefore all to the good ; but the sacrifice was none the less costly to them, nor the pang of it any the less poignant to their human nature. And no heart among them was capable of deeper feeling on the matter than that of the Dartmoor miller who had done so much to sustain the Cause. His Church was to him as the apple of the eye. No man could sing more sincerely than he :

“ For her my tears shall fall,  
For her my prayers ascend,  
To her my cares and toils be given—  
Till toils and cares shall end.

Beyond my highest joy,  
I prize her heavenly ways ;  
Her sweet communion, solemn vows ;  
Her hymns of love and praise.”

He had been nurtured in her lap from his youth ; had shared, more than most others, the friendship of her leaders, and at least two of her honoured founders ; and he had seen the splendour of her service in her most prosperous days. At the annual Church Courts he had long been a familiar figure ; and now he had come to the parting of the ways. I know it was to him a crisis in the life of his spirit,





DARTMOOR COTTAGES



BRIDGE OVER THE TEIGN



and it imposed no small strain on his fast-failing physical powers. From Portsmouth, he returned home greatly weakened in body, but in spirit much inspired by the fine tone of the meetings, and looking forward to the great gathering in Wesley's Chapel, London, where—a few weeks later—the three Conferences were to meet to consummate the Union. As the days passed, he grew weaker: yet his strong will sustained him, and in company with his wife he managed the journey to London and witnessed the impressive ceremony. He had not been there long, however, before his condition compelled him to return; and by this time, it was quite evident to his friends that he had come home to die. Ominous reports came across the moorland to Tavistock where I was then stationed; and then came a letter from his own hand which bore traces of his sufferings, as well as something of his old vein of humour. He told me something had gone wrong with the machinery, and that he was going to consult a very good engineer of such works to see if it could be got into good working order again—otherwise, a famous physician in the West. That consultation followed almost immediately, and as a result he received his death-sentence. When I heard the verdict I hastened to him, and found him greatly emaciated. The vivid flash had gone from his eyes; and the voice, once so flexible and cheery, had become but a faint whisper.

But his fortitude was wonderful. Amid much suffering his spirit was buoyant as ever, and his resignation sweet to behold. His one concern was for the dear ones whom he was soon to leave. He

was literally starving to death, but his spirit was verily nurtured of angels' food. We had Holy Communion together. I remained as long as I dared, but he soon became exhausted. It was one of the most hallowed experiences of my life. There I saw how the grace of the Lord Jesus can transform the sorrows of His own into everlasting joy, and give complete release from the dread of death. This man had been as a father to me, and the ardour of our friendship had never flagged. Never had the least cloud of suspicion shadowed our confidence in each other. That day when I bade him farewell and turned from the old homestead, it was with a heavy heart. I thought of some other partings that have left their impress on the wonderful human story—especially of one recorded in the Acts of the Apostles that has sent its cry down all the ages, when, on the shore at Miletum, the elders of the little Church at Ephesus clung about the great Apostle, "sorrowing most of all that they would see his face no more." I had indeed entered into the experience of Tennyson, so beautifully put in the *In Memoriam* :

" But thou and I have shaken hands  
Till growing winters lay me low,  
My paths are in the fields, I know,  
And thine in undiscovered lands."

How strange that the last breath, the failure of a single heart-beat of all the millions of them, should put such worlds of mystery between two hearts that had so often held sweet communion together,—between the living and the dead ! Or is

it that our own poor imaginings create for us the veil which seems so impenetrable ?

It was in November when last I saw my friend. He lingered until the following January, happy to have his loved ones about him, and often expressing his gratitude for the unspeakable blessings that the Gospel and his Church had brought into his life. When he knew that the end was near he dictated to his Pastor, the Reverend W. D. L. Cann, the following farewell message to his friends in the Churches of the Chagford Circuit :

“ How mysterious are God’s ways ! Six months ago no one would have thought that my voice would now be silent. But while I am close to the gates of death, I am rejoicing in the consolations of God’s grace and the peace of God which passeth all understanding. With my feet on the verge of the river, I would send you a message. I want you to make sure work in the matter of your soul’s salvation. If you leave it until the hours of weakness and pain, the chances are woefully against you. To miss salvation is to miss everything in God’s universe.

“ I would beseech you to give diligent study to God’s Word ; for in the hours of mortal weakness you may not be able to read ; but the memory of some of the three thousand promises will flash across the mind and cheer you as nothing else can do.

“ For forty-four years I have been a member of your Quarterly Meeting, and have borne a part, more or less, in all your struggles, trials, and difficulties. I have watched with deep interest all the heroic struggles up to

the present gratifying state of prosperity and independence. It is for you to carry it higher.

“And now I pray that many of you may become stars in the crown of my rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. Give your warmest love and sympathy to your pastor and his co-workers, and you will get it back in a richer ministry.”

A truly noble message was this! and one that speaks for itself of the type of personality he was of whom these lines are written.

It is pleasing to reflect that the last six years of his life had seen a revival of interest in the work of all the Churches in the moorland Circuit. Two new Chapels had been erected, and all the others had been renovated; while at Spreyton a new school-room had been provided, and at Whiddon Down a new Circuit cemetery. And so much of all this would have been impossible without the enthusiastic and generous support of his none too well-lined purse. I can see even yet the joy-light in his eyes when the largest venture ever made in the Circuit was brought to a satisfactory issue, and the dedication of the new Church was taking place. It was indeed a red-letter day for him, and a crowd gathered from all directions. It was a day of glorious sunshine on the Dartmoor hills, and the President of the Conference had come for the ceremony. Members of other Churches, including the Anglican, were present; and Mr. Perryman presided at the evening meeting. He spoke as one aflame; and in his own inimitable way traced the story of the work in the Circuit from its inception, rejoicing



most of all at the signs of promise in the presence of so many young people who were anxious to carry on the good work of the Churches. The memory of these things, I know, went with him through the closing years of his life, and cheered him as he passed into the valley of the shadow of death.

On January the 16th, 1908, the end came to his sufferings, and in great peace he was translated to the service of the Church Triumphant. It had been a stormy passage at the last ; but he had reached the haven of eternal peace, calm in the faith which had made the greatness of his spirit, the beauty of his life, and the effectiveness of his witness for God to his generation. The following Wednesday his mortal remains were borne along the lanes he had so often traversed and so deeply loved, to the little Providence Church on the hill-side. The Local Preachers of the Circuit were the bearers. A throng of people from all parts of Devon gathered there for the last sad rites. The Member of Parliament for the constituency in which part of the Circuit lay, was present, as was also the squire of the parish. Representatives of all the Churches and the Public Bodies in the neighbourhood were there, and many whom—at one time or another—he had felt compelled to oppose on public questions, came to show their respect for one whom they had known as ever a clean fighter, and the soul of honour untarnished.

The floral and other tributes that came from near and far were a revelation, even to his nearest friends, of the far-flung influence that had gone out from that unpretentious life of his, lived in the



quiet haunts of Dartmoor. At the memorial service both the Governor and Headmaster of Shebbear College—his old school—paid tributes to his memory; the latter, the far-famed Thomas Ruddle, was a lifelong friend of his. The interment took place in the Providence Cemetery close by—the *Campo Santo* of many a Dartmoor Methodist, of which I have written in another chapter. There, in the spot that he held dearest of all on earth—apart from his old home—his dust awaits the resurrection of the just; and a rugged granite boulder, brought from his own farm, marks the place of his rest. The periwinkles trail their blue garlands close by, and the wind chants a requiem in the towering pine-trees; while from the distance comes the sound of running waters. Here have I often felt the force of those haunting lines of William Watson on “Wordsworth’s Grave”:

“The river murmurs past. All else is still.

The very graves seem stiller than they were.

Afar though nation be on nation hurled,

And life with toil and ancient pain depressed;

Here, one may scarce believe the whole wide world

Is not at peace, and all man’s heart at rest.

Rest! ’twas the gift he gave; and peace! the shade

He spread for spirits fevered with the sun.

To him his bounties are come back—here laid

In rest, in peace, his labour nobly done.”

But his true memorial is in the hearts that knew him best and loved him. Such as enjoyed his fellowship can never forget him. The figure of the little, spare man with the prophet eyes and the

heart of sunshine fades not from our memory, nor fails to lure our feet along that pathway which, in the grand imagery of Hebrew poetry, "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The shield upon the coffin bore the inscription :

WILLIAM PERRYMAN,  
DIED JANUARY 16TH, 1908,  
AGED 66 YEARS.

But this we know was merely a concession to our state of mortality ; for such as he was could never die. What I once heard him say of another, jocularly, is aboundinglly true of himself : " He could not die for the life that was in him." Aye ! the life that was in him, the vital principle of Godliness that actuated him, knows naught of death, and naught of decay, but is of the order of eternal progression ! and if our whole world be not a mockery, then I am positively certain that the radiant, steadfast soul of William Perryman goes marching on. And what is more, there are times when I feel that he is not only a memory, but a PRESENCE with me along the ways.

The Right Hon. George Lambert wrote :

" No man was more widely or deservedly respected for high-minded devotion to lofty ideals, and no man did more to realize those ideals. . . . Never was there a truer or more considerate friend."

Mr. Ruddle said :

" William Perryman was a God-fearing yeoman, upright in conduct and respected and loved in his own home. Such men are

the backbone of the nation and the strength of the Church. He was the soul of cheerfulness, and got enjoyment out of most ordinary things. He was a man who enjoyed the beauties of life, and in him they could read the lesson of eternal contentment."

The Reverend W. B. Lark observed :

"As a business man he possessed sterling principles. He went into the market with a very much higher aim than that of driving a bargain. He carried his Christian principles into all his business transactions. He was a true citizen and never lost sight of his duties as such."

So from all quarters came the tributes to his worth and work, a sure evidence that genuine goodness has still a place of honour in the hearts of men, and that there is no witness for Truth so effective as that of a noble and unselfish life.

One more saying of his I must recall ; it was this : "He must be a good man who can sell a horse to his neighbour on a Monday, and then preach to him from the pulpit on the following Sunday." It was a pithy saying, and with great implications for the life of religion ; but such a good man William Perryman was ; and those very things he had done many a time ; and sufficient it is to say that the bargain never detracted from the moral appeal, either of the preacher or the sermon.

Holy men of mediæval ages made tracks across the breezy range of Dartmoor. There are beaten paths from Tavistock to Buckfastleigh Abbey, and from Buckfastleigh to Old Kyrton and Exeter ;

and here and there are still the remains of the ancient stone crosses by the wayside, where they were wont to pause for prayer ; but such knowledge as I have of men and the moorland, leads me to think that no man walked more humbly with his God here on these lonely ways than William Perryman, and few have left behind them a more honourable record than he.



**X**

**A ROMANCE OF THE MILL**

An ancient mill beside a brook,  
An old oak wheel lapped by the stream ;  
And in a spray-bespattered nook,  
The dancing ferns a fairy dream.

Within, upon the oaken floor,  
A story high, the millstones turn ;  
And miller, through the open door  
Watches his wheel the waters churn.

Here down the years, through sun and shower,  
The rumbling wheels and cogs of wood  
Have slowly, surely, ground to flour  
The corn that makes the people's food.

That was indeed a mighty day  
When man first set beside God's rill,  
His tiny hut of stone and clay,  
His wooden wheel and murmuring mill !

Then did he loose upon the earth  
Undreamt of powers : thus, oft, there springs  
Some genius from a lowly birth—  
Some issue vast from homeliest things.



## X

### A ROMANCE OF THE MILL

**I**N the former chapters I have told the story of the little miller of Dartmoor: now this chapter shall be devoted to a romance of his mill. Reference has already been made to Mr. Perryman's great interest in the work of the orphanages and kindred institutions, and his practice of securing his apprentices from among those parentless youths. The great work of George Müller of Bristol, we have also seen, made a special appeal to him, because of its entire dependence upon faith. In the 'Eighties of the last century, there was an opening for an apprentice at Yeo, and Mr. Perryman communicated with Mr. Müller to that effect. After the usual negotiations, a lad was sent down from Bristol on approval. He arrived one afternoon at the quiet Dartmoor homestead, as gay and spirited a youth as could have been desired; and he was given such a reception that he ever remembered it. The sweet, wholesome smell of the first cooked meal he had in that homely kitchen he was never able to forget, nor some of the incidents that immediately followed.

The miller had indeed hit on a lad of parts, and there was no mistaking it. His appearance was striking, to say the least of it. Of average height, he had features of great strength; the eyes were full of life, and fire, and fun; the mouth and jaw marked

him off for a brave fighter, if only he could be won to a good enough cause ; and his quickness of movement was good to see, in contrast with the more leisured manner of the moormen. The miller was soon able to say to himself, " He will do." But neither master nor lad could have foreseen that day how great would be the issue of their coming together. In the life of the lad it was the first step along the road to a remarkable and brilliant career, and the miller had no small notion of the sacredness of his trust, or his opportunity. That first meal over, the master took the lad around to introduce him to the other workers, and his various duties in the mill.

At length they reached the loft where, alone with each other and God, the master told the lad of the love of the Lord Jesus and the meaning of life, and counselled him with all the love of a father and friend ; then together they knelt down there beside the mill-stones and the corn-bins, and called on High Heaven to witness the new compact between them ; and the miller pleaded for the lad that he might be blessed in his new venture, and kept true and steadfast through life. And Heaven came down their souls to meet, there, in the old mill beside the Dartmoor stream. It made a great impression on the lad. It was the consecration hour of his life. Long years after, I ventured to mention to the miller that I had heard of that dedication, and a tremor came into his voice, and a strange light into his eyes ; for then the youth was away on the other side of the world, making a great name for himself. Then the miller took me

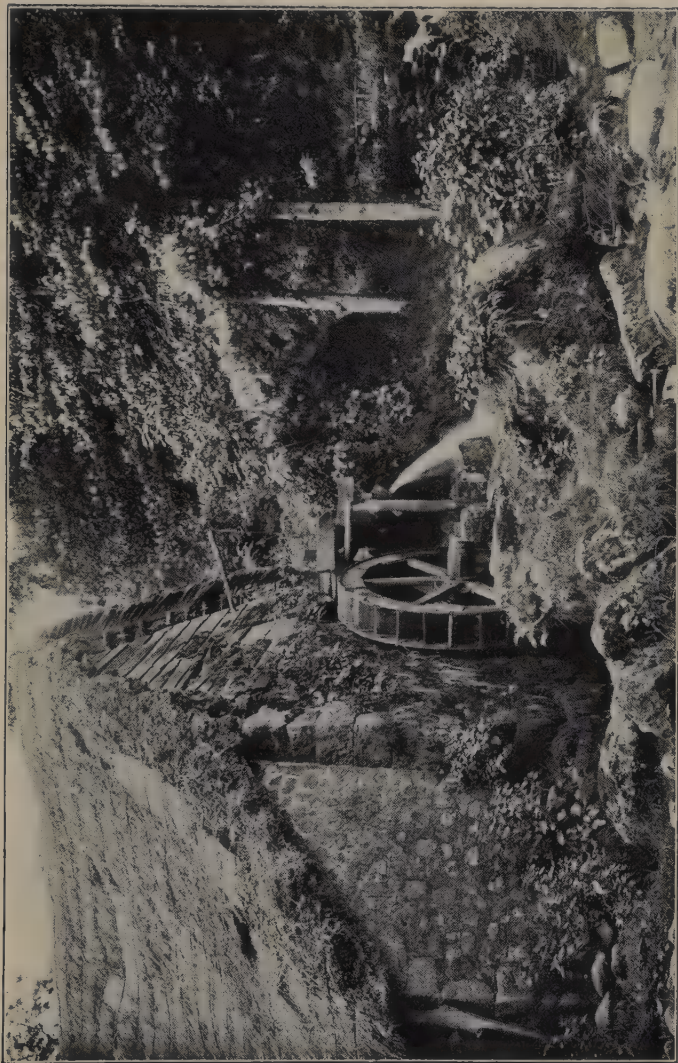
quietly up the stairs to the mill-loft and pointed me out the spot where that consecration prayer had been offered. He was almost too overcome for words ; but I understood.

To return to the lad. His was a remarkable story. At the tender age of six he had lost his mother ; and his father, an Irish Catholic, had given way to drink and had forsaken his child. At thirteen, he was a street arab in the sordid parts of London, and had for years earned his crust in company with a band of young vagabonds who were wont to turn wheels along the streets beside the buses, for such coppers as the passengers cared to fling to them. During these years he never slept in a bed, but sought refuge at night in dustbins or under archways, and he did not know even the alphabet.

One day, as he was standing on his head, for the amusement of the passers-by, a good City Missionary laid hold of him by the heel. He had long been anxious to capture this particular lad ; for he seemed to know that he was no ordinary character. At last he had caught him. It was with great reluctance that the youth accompanied his captor ; but not many days had passed ere he found himself under the hard, but salutary, discipline of the great Bristol institution. There were, of course, scenes of insubordination ; yet the process of civilization went surely on, and at the end of a year or so, the youth was far different from what he had been. He it was who was selected for the situation down on Dartmoor. The writer to whose graphic narrative I am largely indebted for this account of

the early years recalls that the inhabitants of the Caledonian Road were by no means sorry to be relieved of the gay young spark whose pranks had kept things lively for some considerable time in their neighbourhood. But we must leave it to the imagination of the reader to picture the irksomeness of the lad under the discipline of the new order of life at Bristol. By the time the lad reached the Perrymans' he was somewhat "broken to harness," as the saying goes ; and nothing better could have been ordained for him than the lot which had now befallen him. To be under the influence of William Perryman, in those formative years of his life, was for him a blessing unspeakable, and that influence soon began to tell.

The first Sunday he accompanied the family to the little Methodist Chapel at Chagford, and soon he got to know and love his master's Church and people. The decision to become a follower of Christ was not long delayed. Then came the call to be a Local Preacher. Having served his term at Yeo, he obtained a situation in South London, where he often experienced great temptation, and was once dragged round the room and subjected to great humiliation because he would not stand drinks for his workmates. Later, removing to Southampton, he joined the Methodist Church there, and under the influence of its Minister, the call came to him to enter the Ministry. He offered and was accepted ; and having spent a few terms at College, he received his first appointment to a West Country Circuit in 1885. Here his ready wit, gift of utterance, and living zeal, won him the hearts of the people ; and



OLD CHAGFORD MILL





it was soon seen that he was destined for exceptional service.

While here, he first met the lady who was to become his wife, and an interesting story is told of a test which one of the Church leaders imposed upon him soon after his engagement was announced. This person offered to give a good subscription to a charitable object if the young Minister, who was about to give a lecture on his early life, would turn a somersault on the platform, to show the audience how it used to be done on the London streets. The offer was, I believe, at once accepted. But when the evening came, and the audience had gathered, to his dismay he saw the lady of his choice among them, and the last thing he wanted to do was to make himself look ridiculous in the eyes of his fiancée. But he was not the man to run away, whatever the cost may be ; so the audience had their star turn, and the good sense of the maiden was quite equal to the occasion.

It was not long before the call came to him to go to the regions beyond ; and although the Church at home was reluctant to lose a Minister of such promise, the Conference appointed him to the mission in one of our chief colonies, for pioneer work among a rapidly growing population. His first station was at a small centre, and later he was drafted to the capital of the colony. At both places he did a good work, and the success which attended his labours induced the leaders in charge of the mission to set him apart for the opening up of the work in another city of repute. Some nine years before, the Methodists had made an effort to become



established there, but had had to withdraw. However, on a certain rainy day in the April of 1890, the young Missioner and his wife stepped out on the platform at the station; "his only reserves," as one who knew him put it, "his wife, £45, and a faith that laughs at impossibilities."

The next day he went in search of a hall, and found one with accommodation for 350 people. He agreed to take it, and paid a month's rent in advance. The first Sunday he stood on the steps before the Town Hall in the Octagon—his wife by his side—and began to sing:

"Where is my wandering boy to-night?"

He then began to speak to the people, taking as his text the title of an infidel lecture announced on a large poster set up near by. At the close he announced that he had taken the R—— Hall and was commencing services there on the following Sunday. It was a great venture of faith, and no one could tell what was to come of it; but the Missioner was undaunted. The eventful Sunday came, and at the morning service, about twenty persons attended. In the evening the number was doubled. The local Press not only poured cold water on the scheme, but even spoke contemptuously of it all; and even the Ministers Fraternal looked askance at it for a time. But our hero saw no cause for retreating from his purpose; he was made of that kind of fibre that only stiffens with strain; and within nine weeks he had so impressed the city, that in an election he but narrowly missed being made a member of the local licensing bench.

“ You ask me,” said he, “ why in prayer, and speech, and sermon, I incessantly bring before you this greatest of all villainies, the Drink Traffic ! What sent me to beg, and steal, and starve for seven years on the London streets ? The drink ! If the steel had pierced you as it has pierced me, you would not keep silent about it.”

His zeal for the uplift of the people was such that in a short time the hall was crowded for every service on the Sunday ; and in 1892, the Lyceum, a fine building seating a thousand persons, was taken for the work. This building had been erected ten years before by the supporters of the Free-Thought Society ; and, as one observed, “ the allegorical figure of Justice with the scales, which had before done duty for the free-thinkers as an emblem of what they regarded as the balance of human judgment, now rather obviously suggested to the passers-by that the cause of the rationalists had been weighed in the balance and found wanting.” The rationalist congregations had dwindled long before the expiration of the lease, and the secretary had become an evangelist away in another part of the country ; so it came just right for the purpose the young Minister was there to serve.

Here, too, crowds were attracted by the preaching, and visitors from the country went to hear the Preacher just as they do in London the great preachers of the Metropolis. A most pleasing feature of the services was that they drew many from the class that had long drifted away from public worship ; and there were many notable conversions. In one instance, a profligate drunkard,

living apart from his wife, followed the procession from the Octagon to the Lyceum ; and quite unconsciously, the steward showed him into the very seat where his own wife happened to be sitting. The result was that both were converted and happily reunited. Another fruit of the Mission was its contribution to the China mission field of one of the most devoted of Missionaries, now the wife of a well-known Missionary in China.

In 1893, the young Church was obliged to find for itself a new home. Faced with a considerable increase of rent, the subject of this sketch resolved to go the whole way and take the largest auditorium in the city, a building which provided for at least two thousand persons ; and here for some years he preached to crowded congregations, probably the largest in the whole colony. It is no wonder that his success aroused the opposition of the vested interests that were thriving on the degradation of the people, and they did their utmost to upset the good work. The organized effort of one unprincipled man on the City Council produced a by-law which prohibited open-air preaching—a measure of retaliation for the preacher's attack on the poor reputation of some who had charge of the city affairs. But with true Apostolic courage, the Missioner ignored the by-law and went on with his work, his opponents not daring to put it into force, so strongly was he backed by public opinion.

In the 'Nineties he visited England, and preached and lectured in most of the leading Churches of his denomination, and everywhere he made a great impression. His visit to the old home at Yeo was

among his most delightful experiences, and spiritual father and son had great joy in the restored communion. Each was proud of, and thankful for, the other ; and afterward, through many years, until the miller-saint crossed the great river, the most affectionate epistles passed between these twain, and their devotion to each other was tender and true.

The union of the Methodist Churches in the distant Colony afforded an even ampler sphere for the exercise of our hero's ministry, and such was his influence among his brethren, that he was early elected to the Presidential Chair, which position he filled with singular ability. And during the Great War, though no longer a young man, he responded to the call of the Mother Country, and came with his brave boys to the battlefields of Flanders. There he was a Padre beloved, and an inspirer of man in circumstances of the utmost depression. A brief furlough brought him to England, and to the old home by the Dartmoor mill. But the dear master had departed some six years before. What his emotions were on revisiting the scenes of his early years may be gathered from the following letter, written in reply to the one that had carried him the news of his old master's serious illness, in 1907 :

“ MY DEAR MASTER,—This morning a letter came from your address, in the handwriting of one of your daughters ; but when I saw the contents of same, I could not read it ; for I saw at a glance that something was wrong. So I handed it to my wife to read it to me, while the tears came coursing down

my cheeks. . . . The contents have given us great pain and sorrow ; for we do not want you to be laid aside or to suffer. God bless you a thousand times, and be with you in your time of need !

“ You will never die, because in the lives of others your life will be reflected. To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die. We do hope the doctors will be able to conquer your disease, and that you will be spared to your dear ones for some years to come. You have lived a very useful, strenuous life. You have not lived in vain. It does seem a pity that good men should age and become too feeble for efforts of good. If I were anywhere in England, I should be at your side immediately. . . . I wish I could. The only way we can meet together is at the Throne of Grace. May our Heavenly Father help and comfort your loved ones ! I have this consolation, that you know where to look for help. May those comforting passages of Scripture from which you have preached, be a great comfort to you.—I am, your loving old boy,  
W——.”

It is a letter which does credit to both of them, and to the sweet fellowship which was theirs through the years. It reached Chagford the last day of March 1908, but the happy spirit of the miller had returned to the God who gave it. And when next the traveller returned to the hearth, there was the vacant chair and the sense of an irreparable loss.

This is the romance of the old Dartmoor mill, little dreamt of by the casual visitor who wanders by it in his exploration of the moor ; but we may

be sure the records of it are kept where the true values of human life are appraised ; and I fondly imagine that happy spirits gather still about that delectable spot where for so many years a good man lived, and toiled, and prayed, and witnessed to his generation the power of the Living Christ and of the saving grace of God. An old mill near by, the Holystreet mill, for its picturesqueness has often been wrought into works of art ; but its neighbour, though less artistic, has outlived it, and has sent its influence to the uttermost parts of the earth. For here was ground not only the produce of the surrounding fields, but also

“ The corn that makes the holy bread  
Whereby the souls of men are fed,  
The holy bread, the food unpriced,  
Thy everlasting mercy—Christ.”





**XI**  
**THE BELOVED CAPTAIN**

All that hath been majestic  
In life or death, since time began,  
Is native in the simple heart of all,  
The angel heart of man.

And thus, among the untaught poor,  
Great deeds and feelings find a home,  
That cast in shadow all the golden lore  
Of classic Greece and Rome.

J. R. LOWELL.

## XI

### THE BELOVED CAPTAIN

**T**OURISTS, on their first journey down the fair West Country, often express their admiration of the beautiful scenery on the banks of the river Tavy, and especially that portion of it which lies in the vale of Tavistock, the little Gothic town known as "The Western Gate of the Moor." Here the limpid waters thread the rich pasturelands that spread from the foot of the hills to the confines of the town, and pursue their journey through many a fruitful garden, by neat cottage homesteads. Then, chanting by the old cemetery where sleeps the dust of former generations, they flow past the noble town hall, and fall like liquid silver over a broad cascade; and for five hundred yards or more lave the walls of the once famous Benedictine Abbey of Tavistock. Here they negotiate many an embowered pool, and finding their way out again into the meadowlands and the sunlight, make for the Western seas.

Whether one enters the vale by way of the Great Western, or Southern Railway, or by the corresponding highways—the view that opens out is an entrancing one. It is that of a vale set among glorious hills, in the centre of which rise the towers and spires of a delightful country town, where the love of Gothic art blossomed into many beautiful

sanctuaries, and has overflowed to the enrichment of many public buildings and even the dwellings of men.

The ancient Abbey, so long since destroyed, has left its mark on the neighbourhood and the local mind, and Tavistock has never from the earliest times broken with the Gothic tradition. An old gateway of the Abbey still stands: the refectory of the monks serves now as a sanctuary for the Unitarians; and in the Churchyard remains a richly carved fragment of the Abbey Church arcade.

From the sweeping curve which the Southern Railway follows on the hillside, the traveller gets a sustained view of one of the loveliest scenes of rural England; but only he can know the soul of Beauty which pervades these haunts, who abides and meditates among them. He who knows, however, will not wonder that Tavistock gave birth and song to one of the sweetest of West-country poets, William Browne, whose *Britannia's Pastorals* are among the finest productions of the Elizabethan period; and later, to another minstrel of no mean order, whose verse, too, so faithfully mirrors the local scenery—N. T. Carrington.

About two miles over the hill to the west of the town is the tiny hamlet of Mill Hill. It lies in a picturesque hollow amid green pastures and coppices, and consists of some dozen houses and a little unpretentious Chapel of the Methodists. It is approached from the town by a winding lane whose hedgerows in summer are a glory of Devonshire flowers. The lane dips down a steep hill as it nears the hamlet, and the road passes over a grey stone

bridge which spans a little river at the entrance to the same. Often have I lingered on that bridge and watched the clear water sliding over the blue shale bed, and making the kingcups and the fern-fronds dance to its rippling music, while the larks were singing overhead and the sleek kine were grazing in the meadows.

Close to the brook are the cottage gardens, of rich soil and, in season, redundant with vegetables and flowers. Oh the fragrance of those wallflowers and those ten-week stocks, and the roses that seemed to revel in the sunshine of that snug little hollow of Mill Hill ! How it lingers in the memory and sweetens the thought of the past ! Passing the homesteads, the road ascends one of the loveliest of Devonshire lanes and opens on to the country by the Tamar—a scene which the greatest of English landscape painters has immortalized in his masterpiece, “The Passing of the Brook.” From Mill Hill to Sydenham and Endsleigh Cottage, the modest but beautiful retreat of the Russell family, is one of the finest of West-country bournes, with its undulating lands and rare glimpses of the Dartmoor and Cornish hills.

Where the road quits the hamlet there is a huge mound of débris formed from the workings of an ancient slate quarry. The quarry still forms a deep scar on the face of the hill ; but Nature, with its healing process, has covered the mound with a rare wealth of coppice trees, ferns, and mosses ; and in the Spring-time its banks are ablaze with primroses. A steeple track leads up to the summit where the great quarry comes into view ; and, fifty feet

below, a lake of clear water fills the lower workings, and holds, mirrored in its deeps, the soft blue of the sky. On the verge of the rocky precipice, and commanding a view of the workings and the surrounding fields, stands an old house which dates from the reign of Queen Anne, and has still some interesting features of that period. It was built, I believe, by a former Duke of Bedford, as a residence for the overseer of the works; and during my pastorate of the Tavistock Circuit it was occupied by a cheery old saint who was known and beloved over a wide area.

“Cap’n Allin,” as he was known to everybody in those parts, was an outstanding character, and a man well worth knowing. Among his neighbours he stood out original and distinctive, and made an instant appeal to his fellows. Before visiting his home, I had heard of him, his interesting personality, and quaint sayings; and my first meeting with him made evident to me that the esteem in which he was held, and his reputation for originality, were not without reason. He had already reached the allotted span, and was physically enfeebled when first I saw him; but the spirit of the man had refused to grow old. The many cares and sorrows of his life (and he had known more than a man’s full share of them) had left no strain of sadness in him.

It was a radiant soul which tenanted that frail body of his. He was a good man with a buoyant faith in God, and absolutely sure of a Providential Order which shapes life to nobler ends. And, so the years had left to him, if not the philosophic

mind, at least a sure confidence in the ultimate goodness of things, and a bright hope for the future. His own happy spirit enabled him to find a rich fund of interest in very simple things, and made his company acceptable to all.

Like Zacchæus, Cap'n was a man of small stature, though his frame was thick-set and carried a fine head-piece. His jovial countenance, and little quizzing eyes full of sparkle and laughter, at once won your confidence and put you in good humour with him. He was the soul of interest in the life of the hamlet; always ready for a little pleasantry; a real child of Nature, unspoiled, with a mind as fresh as a daisy, and a heart as responsive to his fellows as an aspen leaf to the summer breeze. His sound common sense made him the valued adviser of the community in which his lot was cast. Rich and poor found a friend in him, and I should judge that he was incapable of an enmity against any man.

Cap'n's philosophy of life was a simple one. The world was to him a very nice place indeed—for people who cherished a nice spirit. "Nothing wrong with the world," he would say; "though something has evidently gone wrong with the people that are in it." Some had made a good deal of trouble for themselves, and not a little for others as well. But God was merciful, and the way of Life indeed stood open for all who cared to seek it. Life, rightly lived, was a thousand times worth living, for all the sorrows and the heartbreak of it; and most folk had a jolly sight more of good than they deserved. Trials there were, of course!



but they were essential to our well-being, and saved us from utter selfishness ; and as to grouching about things—well, it was never worth the while.

Early in life Cap'n had committed his way unto the Lord, and though his pilgrimage down the years had carried him through some strange and heart-breaking experiences, he had come out on the shady side of his seventieth birthday with a heart full of sunshine, and a countenance, more often than not, wreathed in smiles. He was as fine a tribute to the power of Divine grace as any could desire. Many years before, his dutiful wife had gone to her long rest ; so also had his only son, the child of his dearest hopes. Two daughters had been spared to him ; one had married a business man some miles away ; and the other, a most dutiful daughter, had remained home to care for him.

Cap'n's life-story can be briefly told. Born in the Delectable Duchy, and brought up among the warm-hearted Cornish Methodists, he had acquired a practical knowledge of the quarrying industry, and in answer to an advertisement for a manager at Mill Hill, he had secured the appointment from the Duke of Bedford, and had crossed the border and settled with his little family in the old quarry house on the mound.

At first the prospects were very promising ; and later, he took the quarry on a lease ; but as the neighbours were wont to say " bad luck attended him." Domestic cares in abnormal measure came upon him, and the removal of the " deads " at the quarry turned out to be a far more expensive affair than he had thought. Still, the brave heart

persevered, and month after month hoped against hope for that turn in the tide which, our master poet tells us, if taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. But if the turn ever did come, Fortune had played a strange prank with Cap'n, for he had used up all his resources.

There can be no doubt that God had something far better for the little man than material prosperity. There are indeed such things as moral values—character, principles, convictions, and spiritual enrichment—these are the real *ad valorem* of life; and often enough, these can best flourish where material wealth is not. It is amazing how few men can stand success in business, and God does much for some of us in keeping us poor. Judged by the commercial standards, Cap'n had been a failure; but judged by the standard of moral quality, he had been a great success. And what man of us all, at the last, would not wish to be weighed by the latter, and not found wanting.

Cap'n's honest, but futile, endeavours had been watched sympathetically by the great house of Bedford, and when the struggle terminated, a position was found for him on the estate; and when advancing age made further active service impossible, the Russell family, true to a noble strain of benevolence that had long distinguished them, made him such allowance as enabled him to live without undue strain for the rest of his days. In these years of retirement, as in the more strenuous ones that had gone, his chief interest lay in the little Chapel at the foot of the mound. He loved every stone of that homely shrine. For half a

lifetime he and his had worshipped there. There his leadership was unchallenged. He was Society Steward, Sunday-school Super, Choir Leader, and Local Preacher. Sundays and anniversary days were gala days to him. How often have I seen him coming down that steeple track to worship, his face beaming with gladness and a fine exposition of that rapt passage of the Psalmist's :

“How amiable are thy tabernacles,  
O Lord of Hosts !  
My soul longeth, yea even fainteth  
For the courts of the Lord.”

And not alone for the heavenly fellowship was Sunday dear to the Cap'n ; but also for the opportunity it brought him for the renewal of old friendships, and the news he could gather of the doings of the other Churches in the Circuit. For Cap'n had long been a Local Preacher, and knew all the sixteen Churches and the leading Methodist families, and was eager to hear from the brethren how it fared with them all. The Ministers too, and Locals, generally took tea at the Cap'n's ; and how swift-winged were the few hours which came between the two services, while the conversations turned on Circuit affairs and diviner things !

Clearly photographed on my mind is that old home with its simple appointments, in which I spent so many happy hours—the table by the window, with the long stool, and the seats in the window ledge ; the hanging shelves in the corner at the head of the table with the Cap'n's “ Library,” which consisted of some few volumes of *The Methodist Magazine*, the well-thumbed Bible and

Hymnal, Barnes' Notes, Bunyan's Works, the Life of Billy Bray, and some old volumes of sermons—an equipment modest enough, but, with the augmentation of the Cap'n's own originality, all that was required; the broad open hearth; the old dresser with its shining plates; the passage with the parlour beyond; and now and again, a friendly hen looking in at the door: such was the environment in which our Greatheart was shaped for the glory which he believed was to be revealed to him.

How warmly did he always welcome me, and with what enjoyment did we commune together in that quaint chimney-corner! He, of course, loved to chat of the old days and the old ways; but he was not a man of the backward look only. He kept his face ever toward the sunlight, and was not at all perturbed at the new-fangled notions which some of the younger brethren advanced. He recognized that his own generation had not made too great a success of running the old world, and was quite content that the youngsters should try their 'prenticed hand at the business.

Many a good story the cheery old optimist told me, and many a laugh did we have there together. He was especially interested in the young Locals who came to preach at Mill Hill; and I often heard his judgment on both preachers and sermons, and have seen his face light up when he was able to report favourably on either. Sometimes it would be the points which the preacher had made that would be discussed, and sometimes those which he had missed. Cap'n, while tolerant in the extreme, could not "abide" a prosy preacher.

The Cornish fire in him made him not a little impatient, at times, of the more phlegmatic Devonshire temperament.

Now and again he would relate some of his own experiences as a Local Preacher. Once he told me of an incident which greatly moved him. He had gone to the other end of the Circuit to take his appointment, and after a walk of several miles and taking a service, Cap'n was more than ready for tea. At the close of the service a poor farm labourer came up to him and said, "I s'pose you must come home with me to tea."

Accompanying him to his cottage a considerable distance away, he entered the house in time to see the housewife disappear through the door at the rear. He felt somehow that all was not well, and that he was not a welcome visitor. The poor woman, who did not share her partner's deep interest in the preachers, was annoyed that he had brought the Cap'n back with him. The husband followed her out into the room at the back, and pleaded with her to come in and take her place at the table. The Cap'n overheard the altercation between them. It transpired that they were very poor, and had nothing much in the house save bread and dripping for tea, and she was humiliated that a stranger should know of the bareness of her larder. Soon the man came in, looking confused; but with that tactfulness which always comes of a true human sympathy, the Cap'n, knowing the condition of things, rose to the occasion and soon had the household at peace.

Feigning to know nothing of their dilemma,

before the good man could explain, Cap'n addressed his host thus : " I say, my friend, I wonder if the wife has a little dripping in the house ? If so, I would much like her to make me a good basin of kettle-broth for my tea. I am very fond of kettle-broth." At this, the good man's face brightened considerably. He thought this could be got : so he again retired to speak with the wife, who then made her appearance, as affably as could be expected. The woman's self-respect was saved, and all had kettle-broth for tea. Cap'n came home that night, rather " leary " as he would say, and as hungry as a hunter ; but happy that he had been able to restore peace in the domestic circle, while his little diplomacy remained unsuspected. This story was rounded off by Cap'n handing me the cream-dish, with a merry twinkle in his eye, which indicated how much better off we younger men were, than those who had gone on before us.

Cap'n had some good stories to tell of the celebrated Billy Bray ; for the two men had long known and loved each other. In fact, Cap'n was a man very much after Billy's own heart. Some time after Cap'n settled at Mill Hill, Billy came on a long-promised visit to him. Quite unexpectedly the little evangelist one day turned up at the house ; and, unfortunately, it was a bad day for the Allins. Cap'n's one and only cow had been taken ill, and was apparently dying. The veterinary surgeon had been summoned from Tavistock, and had pronounced the case as hopeless. This trouble, following on others, had well-nigh crushed the Cap'n's spirit ; and instead of finding his old friend in happy mood



as he had expected, Billy was surprised to see the whole family down in the dumps. He inquired the cause of this, and on being informed, he said, "Oh, I must go up and talk to Faäther about this." And running up the stairs he was soon on his knees in earnest prayer.

After a while, down he came, his face all aglow, and embracing the Cap'n, he exclaimed, "'Tis all right, Cap'n: 'tis all right! Faäther hath a told me that the cow is agoin' to get better agean." And so they praised God together, and from that time there was such improvement that the next day she was on her feet again.

Cap'n recalled, too, an incident which happened years before, when Billy was residing at Lostwithiel, in Cornwall. Billy was preaching there one Sunday afternoon, and noticed the attitude of some of the young folk in the service. So he prayed for them in public, "Faäther, have mercy on the young men and the young women here. Thou knowest that some of 'em be abowin' their heads and pretendin' to pray; but they doän't pray, Loard. The young men do only put their faäces into their hats an' see nothin' but 'Christies, London.' An' the maidens do put their hands bevore their faäces an' peep through their fingers, asayin' to themselves, 'Is he come?'"

But it was in the little Chapel that Cap'n was seen at his best. Seated in the big pew just below the pulpit, and close to the harmonium, he was a sight to behold. Singing was sheer joy to him, and the way he listened to the sermon was an inspiration to the preacher. His absence from the service



seemed to alter the whole tone of it. The moment he entered the door things were different. He seemed to bring light and warmth with him, and his whole person radiated good cheer. His long and honourable association with the place had made him part and parcel of it all. Nothing could approach to zero when he was about. The spiritual thermometer always ran up in his presence. The Sunday-school Anniversary day was a great time for him, for he loved the little ones and he could do anything with them. As they gathered around him with their new attire, and recited their "pieces" and their dialogues, he was the happiest of them all.

One day, in late Spring-time, I was summoned to visit him. He had been taken suddenly ill, and there was little hope of his recovery. It was with a heavy heart I cycled over the familiar road that afternoon to his home. I was at once shown into his room, and realized that he was fast nearing the end of his journey. There he lay in great weakness, but entirely at peace, and awaiting the final call. He was too weak to tell me what was passing in his mind; but a smile lit up his face, which showed that he recognized me, and that he was safe in the Everlasting Arms.

Slowly the tide of life ebbed away, and in a few hours his brave spirit took its flight to the God who gave it. In his sleep of death he looked serene and beautiful—like a saint who had seen a vision of angels. And why not? I am certain from what I knew of him that the angels had trafficked often between the Invisible and that old grey home on the mound. That evening of his passing Heaven

seemed to breathe a benediction on all that sweet countryside round about, and in our hearts there was a great peace.

A few days later we gave him Christian burial. We bore his body reverently through the green lanes to the Mother Church at Tavistock, where we gave God thanks for his useful life ; and practically the whole Circuit was represented. None who were present will ever forget the gracious influence of that service. We had assuredly followed him up to the gates of the Celestial City. Later we laid him to rest in the lovely cemetery by the banks of the Tavy, and turned back to our homes with the great words of our risen Lord ringing in our ears :

“ I am the Resurrection and the Life,”

but with the feeling, too, that the old haunts at Mill Hill could never be the same again to us ; for

“ A light was from the household gone ;  
The voice we loved was still.”

That deep voice with the quaver in it, the voice that had so long led the singing in the little sanctuary out yonder, we should hear no more ; but we thought of him in happier regions, and remembered the words that he had so often rejoiced in hope to sing :

“ In mansions of glory and endless delight,  
I'll ever adore Thee and dwell in Thy sight ;  
I'll sing with a glittering crown on my brow,  
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.”

**XII**

**JOHN AND ELIZABETH SARGENT  
OF HORRABRIDGE**

Old John, you were not of the Calvinists :  
    " The doctrine of Election," you declared—  
You gentlest of all gentle Methodists—  
    " A soul-destroying doctrine." Who so dared  
    God's mercy limit, he must be prepared  
For something awful, not propounded clearly,  
    But dark as deepest doom that Dante bared,  
        Or very nearly.

And who shall blame you, John ? Our prayers are  
    good—

    Compact of precious fragments, passion clips  
Of many souls, cemented with the blood  
    Of suffering. So we kiss them with the lips  
    Of awful love : but when the irregular grips  
Of zeal constrain the cleric breast or laic,  
    Into a thousand fiery shreds it rips  
        Our old mosaic.

And so it was with you, old John . . .  
        . . . the thirst

    For God was in you from the very first.  
The rushing flood, the energy ecstatic,  
    O'erwhelmed you that you could not chose but burst  
        All bonds prelatic.

T. E. BROWN.

## XII

### JOHN AND ELIZABETH SARGENT OF HORRABRIDGE

WHEN I first took up my pastorate of the Tavistock Circuit, a leading friend said to me, "Do you know Mr. and Mrs. Sargent of Horrabridge?" I replied that I had not yet made their acquaintance, but had heard of them. "Well," said he, "they are the leading people in the Circuit, and of sterling quality: only, remember, when you are dealing with them, that Nature blundered a little in their make-up; for to all intents and purposes, from your view-point, she is the man and he is the woman. Treat them so, and you will have a good time with them." I found that my adviser was a shrewd interpreter of character, and the advice he tendered me was most true to the facts of the case.

This information made me somewhat curious concerning the strange couple I was so soon to meet; and I looked forward with no little interest to my first visit to Horrabridge. This visit fell on a Sunday when I was planned to preach there. I spoke with them after the service, and they invited me home to tea. I soon realized that the description I had received of them was an accurate one. A man of short stature, with silver-grey hair, sparkling eyes, sensitive lips whose movements

suggested a nervous disposition, and a sweet, tremulous voice, came forward to meet me ; but the grip of his hand told of a strength of character beneath all the tenderness that looked out from his eyes, and moved tremulous in his utterances.

It is now long years since I gazed on that happy face of his ; but I can see now the play of the great emotions that would so deeply stir his sympathetic nature, and the lights and shades that would come over his countenance as he sat listening to the Word of Life in the village sanctuary, while the preacher was trying the moods of the soul. And how often would those eyes of his become moist when the theme was the love of God, or the baseness of human ingratitude ! I am certain there were times when he could have well-nigh pulled people into the kingdom, and when the whole language of his soul was :

“ Oh ! that men would praise the Lord for His goodness  
And for His wonderful works to the children of men.”

And with what rapture would he sing :

“ Oh, that the world might taste and see  
The riches of His grace :  
The arms of love that compass me  
Would all mankind embrace.”

Beside him stood his noble wife, a strong, muscular woman, standing five feet ten, and splendidly proportioned ; her features firmly set, with a mouth of determination, and live penetrating eyes which seemed to search one through. Her tone and bearing were masterful. None would dream of taking advantage of her. A just woman and one

that feared God was she ; and one to inspire fear in the hearts of evil-doers. At first I thought her formidable, and—metaphorically—leaned on her husband for support ; but I soon detected a sly glance of humour (saving, precious humour !) stealing from the corner of her eyes, as though she had been “having me on a little” ; and I discovered that her bark was worse than her bite. I found that she liked to be taken at her full weight, and then to surprise one with some gentle look or act of kindliness. It was as though some prankish imp would steal into her nature and upset her gravity for the moment ; but she would soon recover it ; and then one had to wait for a fresh opportunity. Yet, what a splendid soul she was to those who had intimate knowledge of her, and how well they were mated after all ! An inkling of all this came to me that first afternoon I spent in their company ; but I owed much to the friendly hint I had before received.

Elizabeth Sargent had very little more sentiment. She was a plain, straightforward, practical woman who, although she had such an emotional husband, looked with suspicion on folk that were too easily moved. But her array of the masculine virtues was really directed by a kind heart as well as by a well-balanced judgment. It was sometimes difficult to tell whether her kindness was stern or her sternness kind ; but she would have been a rare friend to have standing by one in adversity ; and it was a joy to see her bring to book the slackers in the Church, and such as had taken offence at some triviality. Her judgments of character were in-



stinctive, swift, and fearless ; and she had little patience with the cotton-wool kind of people. She could give hard knocks, and take them too ; and as such all the villagers knew and respected her ; while to her neighbours in need she sent many a benefaction.

John Sargent was the village miller, and a diligent, hard-working man ; but much of his success was undoubtedly due to his wife's business ability. Where he with his tenderer nature would have yielded to the blandishments of designing people, she would stiffen him up ; and it was no doubt her business faculty, as well as her devotion to the Lord's work, that led to her taking office as Society Steward long years before woman came to anything like her present place in the Church. So, thus happily mated, they had pulled along well together in business and in the affairs of their little Church ; and having made a modest sum at the mill, partly for reasons of health, they retired from that business and started dairy farming in a small way. It was soon after this that I made their acquaintance.

John was a North Devon man who had come South in his teens ; and by that law of contrasts that works so wonderfully in Nature, he had fallen in love with the brave and brawny Tavistock maiden who was destined to make him the best of wives. They had had no children, and were therefore the more free to take up the Lord's work. They were regular in their attendance, generous in their gifts, and whole-hearted in their devotion to the Cause. Together they came and went, and it was a well-beaten track which led from their hearth to their

shrine ; while their house was always open to the Circuit Ministers. In the social life of the Church she took the lead, and none questioned her right so to do. I have sometimes wondered what her business achievements might have been had her lot been cast in an ampler sphere ; and I am certain she would have carried a much more responsible position. As it was, she was the strong character of the little Church and of the community in which she lived ; and her moral integrity was equal to the strength of her personality.

As far as memory serves me, the only serious difference that had ever arisen between husband and wife was occasioned by what she regarded as a rash act on his part at a missionary meeting. John had been elected by the District Synod as a representative to the annual Conference. It was his first experience of that august assembly ; and coming, as he had done, from the quiet Dartmoor village, the proceedings had greatly impressed him. But his emotions were most deeply stirred on the occasion of the great Missionary Day of the Conference ; for on that occasion Dr. Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission, in an eloquent and searching address, had pleaded the cause of China's millions until the assembly stood committed to a gigantic enterprise of faith. There and then the leaders pledged themselves to raise the money to open up the work in the province of Yunnan, if the men required were forthcoming. Almost immediately they were called upon to honour their compact, for two heroic young men, T. G. Vanstone and S. T. Thorne, offered themselves as pioneer Mission-

aries for the new field. Hearts were thrilled indeed, and eyes were filled with tears, as those two splendid youths stood before the Conference and related their call to the work. It was a wonderful response which was made. Men who had never before thought far out beyond their own little circles had a vision of God's far whitening fields, which sent their hands into their pockets, and produced gifts to the tune of hundreds of pounds. Needless to say, the little Dartmoor miller was swept clean off his feet. His heart bent before the sweep of that wave of emotion as the ripe corn sways to the passing breeze. He felt as though he could scarcely withhold anything. The great tears trickled down his cheeks, and his spirit was so deeply moved that when he filled in his form of promise, it was for a sum that made no small inroad into his modest savings. A stroke or two of the pen and the savings of many a day had vanished.

No sooner had the promise been read out than there rose before him the vision of the big woman at home, without whom he had reckoned in that hour of sweeping emotion and sublime self-abandonment. But reckon with her he would soon have to do ; and that the enemy knew well enough, and did not spare the lash. The fear of it haunted him for the rest of the session. Not that the wife would disapprove of the object : not that she would wish him to dishonour the promise which he had made, or that she herself might not have done the same thing had she been similarly circumstanced. But that was just the point that troubled him : she had not been so circumstanced ; and how was he—never



ELIZABETH SARGENT

*Photo: Yeo, Plymouth]*



JOHN SARGENT

*Photo: Yeo, Plymouth]*



HORRABRIDGE

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the best one to give expression to his feelings—how was he to reproduce to her the atmosphere in which he had done the rash deed—the weighty, the vital spirit of it? That, he knew well enough, was impossible.

It is always a difficult thing for the average man to express his deeper emotions or call back the exact conditions in which some great mood of his soul was inspired, or some vital experience engendered; and as to communicating such to another person of another temperament—well, it cannot be done! He had done this thing without consulting her! Always it had been their rule, and a very wise one too, that they should act together; but now he had taken the law into his own hands, and had therefore a wholesome fear of the law. As may be imagined, his mental state these few days was a very complex one. Should he write and tell her, and so prepare the way; or leave it until he saw her? Happy in the sense of the divine acceptance of his sacrifice, he was far from happy at the prospect of meeting her. Certain that he had honoured his divine relationship, he was far from assured that he had done just the right thing on the human side. What right had he, after all, to pledge his “better-half” in such a transaction? Did the Lord require this thing of him? So complex are even our simplest duties and relationships to a person of sensitive nature and tender conscience! At any rate, he soon came to feel how much more delightful it would have been if he had first consulted her, and both their hearts had gone out to China together. So, trembling between hopes and fears, rejoicings

and forebodings, he prayed that he might find his wife like-minded and that nothing should mar their peace.

At length the day of confession came ; and confession, it is said, is good for the soul. John took his courage in both hands and made a clean breast of the matter. In his own broken way he told her to what extent they stood committed, and under what conditions he had acted. Her eyes at first were full of rebuke as he stammered out his excuses. "It was no use ; I—I couldn't help myself—I had to do it ; and I feel somehow now, that I did the right thing : only I—I wish I had talked it over with you. Still I am sure you would have done the same if you had been there."

And her heart told her that he was right. His tearful eyes melted her ; and she, with him, honoured the promise that had been so hastily made, but never really repented of. She feigned a scolding mood. He was never to do such a thing again ; but it was all too thin to hide the real heart of the woman ; so John went on his way rejoicing. Years after, I dared to recall the incident at their tea-table ; and the little man began his excuses again, and the big woman looked across at him with that threatening look of hers ; a reminder to him of what would be likely to follow if ever such a thing should happen again. I had to smile, and then we all smiled together, though John's eyes became moist again in a moment, and I could see that in her heart she was proud of the simple, sincere, loving nature of her man who had so erred—on the RIGHT side.



John's great day of the year was that of the Sunday-school Anniversary. For forty years he had served as teacher and superintendent; and though himself a childless man, it was wonderful to watch him at work among the children. He gathered the little folk about him as by the spell of a wizard spirit. I should say that every child in the neighbourhood knew and loved him. There are many yet living who would bear testimony to the good influence which he brought to bear on their childhood, and the gracious atmosphere of the man. He had ever a cheery word and smile for them all; and on the great day of the feast their little performances lifted him into the seventh heaven of his earthly joy. The sight of suffering child or animal was too much for him. This beautiful childlike spirit he carried to the last.

True, his mind was only of the average mould; but his heart was a heart of gold. His theology was of a concrete kind; but his certainty of God, his contented disposition and inward peace, would have made him the envy of many a man with a much more pretentious philosophy of life. And what an inspiration he was to the preacher, with his bright, honest face, his warm-hearted participation in the service, his eager hearing of the Word, and the fervency of his prayers! He lived the life of a Christian, did John; and I believe he was as white a soul as I have ever known. He often reminded me of that other John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. Indeed, love was the outstanding quality of the man. I am sure he tried to love everybody. He could not understand how Chris-

tians could be opposed to each other. He would speak of their differences with manifest pain ; and was ever, himself, a true peacemaker. More complex natures than his own he could not well understand, nor their temperamental difficulties ; and if one tried to find extenuating circumstances for them, he would say, " Well, but what about the grace of God ? And what about the Spirit that helpeth our infirmities ? Surely these are not in vain ! The Lord in whom they trust is able to deliver them." And what further could one reply ?

In the home of his boyhood, Holsworthy Circuit, he had had the opportunity of knowing many of those dedicated souls who had done so much to inaugurate and sustain that remarkable work of the last century which transformed the North of Devon, and became known as Bible Christian Methodism. The saintly Thomas Braund of Sutcombe, the Thornes, and Ruddell of Shebbear, and the many leading Methodist families of the Holsworthy district, had left their mark on him ; and he would recall with joy those early days, and those fine characters by whose shining example he had himself found, and followed, the Way of Life.

And the glory of those early days never left him. Through all the years of his life in the Tavistock Circuit, he preserved to us the type of the early Bible Christians, to whom many of us owed so much ; and his brethren delighted to honour him. He was for many years Circuit Steward, and served as delegate to the District Synods and Conferences. As long as he was able, he served his

generation in the fear of God ; and through an uneventful eventide, he and his partner awaited the call to "Come up higher." In 1921, after a protracted illness, death broke the fair companionship, took from John's side the strong, capable soul who was heaven's gift to him, and left him disconsolate, save that his hope in God remained as bright as ever to him ; and two years after, on February the 4th, 1923, his spirit took its flight to those fairer regions

"Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,  
Nor even wind blows loudly ; but it lies  
Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard-lawns  
And bowery hollows crowned with Summer sea,  
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."

A large number of those who had known and honoured him gathered about his bier in the old Chapel that had been so long his spiritual home ; and there with tender hearts they gave God thanks for the white flower of a blameless life that had blossomed so fair among them, and whose fragrance yet remains. Afterwards, Brother Body was laid to rest in Tavistock Cemetery beside that of his wife, on the banks of the Tavy, just where it leaves the broad vale on its way to the beautiful ravine of "The Virtuous Lady," as it is called. There are others sleeping peacefully there who served Methodism in those parts, and as I mused recently among their tombs, I thought of another who loved those haunts and sang so sweetly of them—N. T. Carrington, whose birthplace Tavistock was.

Revisiting this delectable spot after many years, the place made a great impression on me. The

imposing portal with its flanking towers, the stately granite Chapel so fairly poised at the end of an avenue of Cypress trees, the broad green sward on either side of it, studded with its beautiful memorials and so perfectly trim, compose a picture of solemn grandeur that well becomes the mystery which men call Death. It seemed to me that Carrington's lines were most appropriate here :

“ Fair flowers in sweet succession should arise  
Through the long blooming years above the grave.  
Spring breezes will breathe gently o'er that turf  
And Summer glance with mildest, meekest beam  
To cherish Piety's dear offerings.

Oh ! there shall be

The polished and enduring laurel ; there  
The green and glittering ivy, and all plants,  
All hues and forms delicious that adorn  
The brumal reign and often waken hopes  
Refreshing. Let eternal verdure clothe  
The silent fields where rest the honoured dead,  
While mute affection comes and lingers round  
With slow, soft steps, and pensive pause and sigh  
And tear, all holy.”

X I I I

WESLEY AND THE QUAKERS OF  
STICKLEPATH

Now often when our English roads I roam,  
I seem to see thee still, astride thy hack ;  
Those silver locks by the fresh winds blown back ;  
God's sunlight shining on thy venerable dome,  
And in thy delicate hand an open tome,  
Drawn from its few companions in the pack.  
No word of heavenly wisdom didst thou lack :  
With prince or peasant, equally at home.  
From sky and sea, broad pastures, mountain air,  
Thy spirit keen drank in the grace of heaven  
And often by the wayside, like thy Lord,  
Was sown in faith the good seed of the Word :  
But yestermorn, in Glo'ster ; at a fair  
To-day, in Somerset ; to-morrow, Devon.

Again I see thee, 'lighting from thy horse  
In some quiet hamlet of our countryside,  
The peasants list'ning with eyes open wide,  
In wonder at thy simple, sweet discourse ;  
Or in the city, with a crowd, perforce,  
Thrilled with thy witness to the Crucified :  
Some striving sore the penitent tear to hide,  
And strong men for their sins filled with remorse.  
Here, colliers 'grimed ; there, ploughmen from the soil,  
Learnt from thy lips the Gospel freshly told :  
And suddenly, above their common ways,  
God's angels sang ; and they, with grateful praise,  
Followed in radiant mood their arduous toil,  
Nor would have sold their joy for countless gold.

L. H. C.

*(From the Author's poem on Wesley.)*







THE HOUSE IN WHICH WESLEY WAS ENTERTAINED AT STICKLEPATH



METHODIST CHURCH, STICKLEPATH

### XIII

## WESLEY AND THE QUAKERS OF STICKLEPATH

**A**BOUT twenty miles west of Exeter, on the northern fringe of the moor, nestles the delightful little village of Sticklepath. Situated some seven hundred feet above sea-level, it enjoys all the advantages of the invigorating air, the sparkling streams, and the romantic scenery with which the so-called Dartmoor "forest" abounds. The village itself stands in a miniature valley scooped out of the flank of Cawsand Beacon, the monarch of the moor, whose somewhat trim and rounded form stands out in marked contrast to the rugged nature of so much of the moorland scenery, and slopes down to the village, and to the green marshes of the river Taw beyond.

Mother Nature has indeed lavished beauty on this sequestered valley among the hills: green meadow-lands and peaceful farms, a background of charming woodlands and majestic hills, and picturesque cottages with their little gardens of old-fashioned blooms and rustic bowers. Two babbling streams haste on amid granite boulders and beds of meadow-sweet to unite near the bridge at the end of the village. Close by is a mighty rent in the hills, formed by some strange upheaval of

Nature in a far age ; but now beautiful with masses of purple heather, scented pines, and moss-covered rocks. Such is the scene presented to the eye of the traveller as he passes down the great road to the west over the northern bounds of Dartmoor. And there is much to justify the opinion held by many that this is one of the prettiest of West-country villages.

Like so many other places of the same name it owes its appellation to the steep, or "stickle" track that leads from it up to the neighbouring hills. Quiet as it is, Sticklepath has a history of its own, of no ordinary interest. Centuries before our civilization travailed to its birth, man had made this glen his habitation. The neighbourhood abounds with historic and pre-historic interest ; and the glamour of old romance lies on it all. Hundreds of feet above the village rises the noble beacon, where so often the lurid flame had flashed out its messages of national warning and rejoicing. The foundations of the great beacon itself when last I was there could still be traced, and the course of the flues determined. Many a stone lies scattered around, red still with the brand of the fires that were extinguished so long ago. One mile distant stands the sister village of South Zeal with its ancient home of the Oxenham family ; and near by, the fine old manor of West Wyck, both of which figure in modern fiction ; and just where the road leaves Sticklepath for Okehampton, there is a well of great antiquity, which has a granite head with an inscription, "LADY WELL, DRINK AND BE THANKFUL," and is known locally as the

Lady-well. The stonework is so crude in its ornamentation that it has puzzled all the antiquarians ; but its presence here is evidence that this road is one of the most ancient tracks of men in the West.

But for our purpose, it is the association of Sticklepath with the great Evangelist of the Eighteenth Century that counts. The village, lying as it does on one of the main roads from Exeter to Plymouth and Cornwall, was visited on several occasions by John Wesley and other early Methodist preachers, in their journeys to and from the Delectable Duchy. Wesley's first visit is thus recorded in his *Journal* :

“*Sept. 22nd, 1743.*—As we were riding through a village called Sticklepath, one stopped me in the street and asked me abruptly, ‘Is not thy name Wesley?’ Immediately, two or three came up and said that I must stay there. I did so ; and before we had spoken many words our souls took acquaintance with each other. I found they were called Quakers ; but that hurt me not, seeing the love of God was in their hearts.”

These words bear testimony to the reproach borne by the Quakers in those early days ; and not less to the triumph of divine grace in the heart of Wesley, over the strong sectarian prejudice which had so long been characteristic of him. On April the 1st, 1744, Wesley again visited Sticklepath. The previous day he had ridden from Chard, in Somerset, a distance of about forty miles, to the adjacent hamlet of Crockern Well, a place that afterward became of some importance as a station to the old coaches running between Plymouth and

London. After a heavy journey through storms of hail and snow, Wesley reached Crockern Well at nine o'clock in the evening. The visit is thus recorded in the *Journal* :

“ The following morning I rode to Sticklepath : at one, I preached in an open place on ‘ This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in His Son.’ A storm of hail and rain began when I was preaching, but the congregation did not move. At five, I preached again. Many of the poor people followed me to the house at which I lodged, and we could not consent to part until we had spent another hour in exhortation and prayer and thanksgiving.”

During this brief Sabbath stay at Sticklepath, Wesley read the account of John Endacott, Governor of New England, and his connection with those who beat and imprisoned so many of the poor Quakers, and murdered William Robinson, Marmaduke Stephenson, and others. “ Who would have looked for father inquisitors at Boston ? ” observed Wesley. “ Surely these men did not cry out against popish cruelty.” It is a striking coincidence, but one which may explain how Wesley read this particular account at Sticklepath, that Endacott is one of the most prevalent names in this district of Dartmoor ; and I have ascertained that a family bearing that name, and belonging to this neighbourhood, were among the early emigrants to New England ; from which family, we are told, Mrs. Joseph Chamberlain, the wife of the famous politician, traces her descent.

The next day, Wesley preached at five in the

morning, and then left for Launceston. On the afternoon of the 17th the great Evangelist returned to Sticklepath, and again conducted divine service. After an hour spent in prayer, he commended the little company of worshippers to God, and then left for Crediton, the ancient town some thirteen miles distant, the site of an old Saxon diocese and birth-place of St. Boniface, the apostle to the Goths. Here he could not do much, as he found the town largely reduced to ruins as the result of a recent fire.

Wesley next visited Sticklepath on Monday, September the 1st, 1746, when on his way to Cornwall with T. Butts. Early in the morning of that day, having conducted a service at Middelzoy, on Sedgmoor plain, they set out for the little Dartmoor village, where they were sure of a kindly welcome—a long journey, of nearly sixty miles. It was a day of heavy rain, and by noon the travellers were thoroughly wet. They reached Sticklepath in the evening, and next morning left for Plymouth Dock. On Tuesday, September the 16th, on the return journey, Wesley paid his last recorded visit to his beloved Quaker friends at Sticklepath.

That he should have elected to stay the night there, instead of at the more important centres of Okehampton or Exeter, is some indication of the high regard he had formed for those interesting people; and there is reason to believe that just as God had used the Moravians as a means to quicken the soul of Wesley into a deeper life of the Spirit, so now, these honest and God-fearing men on the moorland were employed for the broadening of his mind to a truly Catholic conception of the Kingdom



of God, in the Church Universal. His later visits to the West Country took him in other directions. Having passed this way so many times, Wesley, with his keen sense of spiritual economics, probably felt it to be his duty to take an alternate route which lay a little to the north, and which took him through some villages he had never before visited. For, like his great forerunner, he was ever anxious to preach his Gospel "in the regions beyond."

As far as I can gather, the little colony of Quakers at Sticklepath was founded by Friends who had migrated there from Exeter in the later years of the Seventeenth Century. And what more fitting environment could they have found for their faith and practice? Their emphasis on the Voice of the Spirit, the Inner Light, and the duty of Silence, must have endeared to them the haunts of this charming sanctuary of Nature, so highly set among the hills, where the solitudes inspired a reverent awe and made it easy for the soul to hold communion with the Eternal; where such mystic lights and shades are flung upon mountain and moorland that the gigantic crags and tors take on an almost ethereal vestiture, and the vast expanse of bracken-fern and heather-bloom is itself a veritable Paradise.

Some traces still remain of those humble folk who, but for their hospitality to the servant of the Lord, might have been unremembered in this generation. As it is, their names are unknown to us; but their sympathy with an unpopular cause has won for them an enduring memory with all who bear the name of Methodist. The house yet



stands in which Wesley preached to the villagers. The open space, of which mention is made in the *Journal*, is still pointed out to the visitor. But most interesting of all is the little Quaker cemetery hidden away behind the houses, where sleeps the dust of the good men and women who welcomed Wesley to the moorland so long ago. A more appropriate resting-place for those of their religious persuasion it would be difficult to find. It is situated in the centre of the glen, under the shelter of the great hills, and is embowered with trees of evergreen. The silence is unbroken save by the sound of the smithy near, the plashing of a water-wheel, and the chant of a brook that meanders by.

By kind permission of the village postmaster, one of the few remaining descendants of the original Quakers, whose features I thought contrasted strikingly with the ordinary Dartmoor type, I was able to examine the cemetery register. An entry made in 1818 shows that for many years the freehold had been in the possession of a Mr. Cross of Exeter, a devoted leader among the Friends, who purchased it for the purpose of providing a burial-ground for the Quakers ; and from time to time he himself attended there to bury members of the fraternity. The last entry of the original Quakers which it contains, is one made in 1818, of the burial of John Langmead, " whose mother was connected with the Quakers." Ten years later, negotiations were entered into with Mr. Cross for the conveyance of the freehold to a duly appointed trust for the purpose of a public cemetery. The death of Mr. Cross having occurred meanwhile, the negotiations

fell through ; but it was finally purchased by the late Mr. Thomas Pearce, a member of a well-known and honoured Nonconformist family of the district ; and it is now vested in a trust, as a village cemetery.

Not a few of the village Hampdens of local Free Church life now sleep in this little God's Acre—men and women who in their day were not ashamed to espouse an unpopular cause, and who held high the flag of religious freedom in the West. Two honoured Ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church are here interred, one of whom was the grandson of Thomas Trethewey, who was among the last of the preachers to be sent out by Wesley himself. There are no stones to mark the graves of the early Quakers ; but many years since, one who treasured their memory, and that of their kindness to the early Methodists, set up a stone of remembrance with this inscription :

Phil. iv. 3.  
" Whose Names  
are in the Book of Life."

IN THIS CONSECRATED GROUND  
ARE INTERRED THE BODIES  
OF THE PIOUS  
QUAKERS,  
LATE RESIDENTS OF THIS  
VILLAGE, WHO IN THE  
YEAR 1743 AND AFTER,  
WELCOMED AND  
ENTERTAINED THE  
WESLEYS, J. NELSON,  
AND OTHERS, AS THEY  
JOURNEYED TO PREACH  
THE GOSPEL.

" Be not Forgetful to  
Entertain Strangers."  
Heb. xiii. 1, 2.

In the corner of the cemetery the visitor may find a pleasant ivy-clad bower, built there by some pious soul as a retreat for prayer and quiet meditation. A tiny table stands in the centre for the purpose of the reader ; and this is indeed a nook for a book. On the walls are large wooden panels with inscriptions, one of which contains those beautiful lines of James Montgomery's which I thought eminently suited to the surroundings, and may well have been penned on the spot :

" A scene sequestered from the haunts of men,  
The loveliest nook of all that lovely glade,  
Where weary pilgrims find their last repose ;  
The high, the low, the mighty, and the fair,  
Equal in death, were undistinguished there ;  
Yet not a hillock mouldered near the spot  
By one dishonoured or by all forgot ;  
To some warm heart the poorest dust was dear,  
From some fond eye the meanest claimed a tear,  
And oft the living, by affection led,  
Were wont to walk in spirit with the dead.  
Green myrtles fenced it, and beyond the bound  
Ran the clear rill with ever murmuring sound.  
'Twas not a scene for Grief to nourish Care ;  
It breathed of Hope and moved the heart to prayer."

One other inscription found on a tombstone near by appealed to me. It was, if I remember rightly, over the grave of a little girl :

" There fell upon the house a sudden gloom,  
A shadow on the features fair and thin ;  
And softly from that hushed and darkened room  
Two angels issued where but one had been."

As I mused in this sacred spot, I could not help thinking how the faithful souls of the past had

consecrated and immortalized the scenes of their earthly toil ; and how often, too, common lives had been rescued from oblivion and lifted into the light of a fadeless glory by some simple service of love which they never dreamt would have permanent record in the story of their race.

The picturesque Methodist Chapel, with its quaint bell-turret, is the principal memorial of the impress which the great Founder of Methodism made on the life of the Dartmoor village, though the present fabric was built some years after Wesley's association with Sticklepath ; and close by the cemetery is an old-world garden, with a summer-house built over the sparkling brook, where many a leader of latter-day Methodism has sought and found release from strenuous toil, in times of physical exhaustion. In that garden retreat of Tawburn, several Presidents of Conference and many a well-known Missionary have mused and shared sweet Nature's communion ; for the Mistress of Tawburn, now long since gone to her rest, was a great-hearted lady, and found delight in sharing her bounty with the servants of the Lord.

I recall many a conversation which took place in that little Dartmoor bower by the singing brook. Literature and poetry, theology and philosophy, politics and social reforms, the work of the Church at home and abroad—these were often the subjects of discussion there. One of the last of these happy occasions I shall ever remember. My companion then was a brilliant young medical student, whose modesty was such, that when he had secured the gold medal of his University, his parents in their

homely manse never heard about it until one day the father came across it concealed in a drawer. The years have flown since then, and that young student has done a magnificent work away in the heart of Western China, in a well-known Missionary Hospital ; and thousands of Chinese have occasion to thank God for his heart of love and his high surgical skill.

Now, whenever I pass through Sticklepath, it is with a somewhat heavy heart ; for the big house that was once so open to us all has passed into other hands, and all its former occupants have crossed the flood. Father, mother, son, and daughter, one after another, and within but a few years, answered the call of the veiled angel. And the beautiful bay cob that used to speed us over the moorland did not long survive them. SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI !

Yet, all is not sadness ; for there is sweetness in the remembrance of them ; and their kindness sheds a glamour for many of us over these quiet moorland ways—a light of consecration which will remain to them as long as life shall last. And what is more, thoughts of them beguile our hearts as we tread the onward way, and lift us in contemplation to those fair realms of the spirit world which the Greatest of all Teachers taught us to anticipate with absolute confidence ; and where we also—as we are so often reminded in those grand words of that last service that can be said for any of us on the earth—“ with all those who are departed in the true faith of Thy Holy Name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and

soul, in Thine everlasting glory ; through our Lord Jesus Christ."

In that great hope in which they lived and died, these noble sons and daughters of the moor, we now leave them, until for us also, who travelled with them for a time the Pilgrim Way, the morning of Eternity shall arise, and we shall rejoin their fellowship beyond the tomb. If, for the reader, as for the writer of these humble records of saintly lives, there shall come through these pages some inspiration for Christ-like life and service, then the task of love which has been here undertaken will not have been in vain, and I shall have had my reward. Readers, FARE YE WELL !

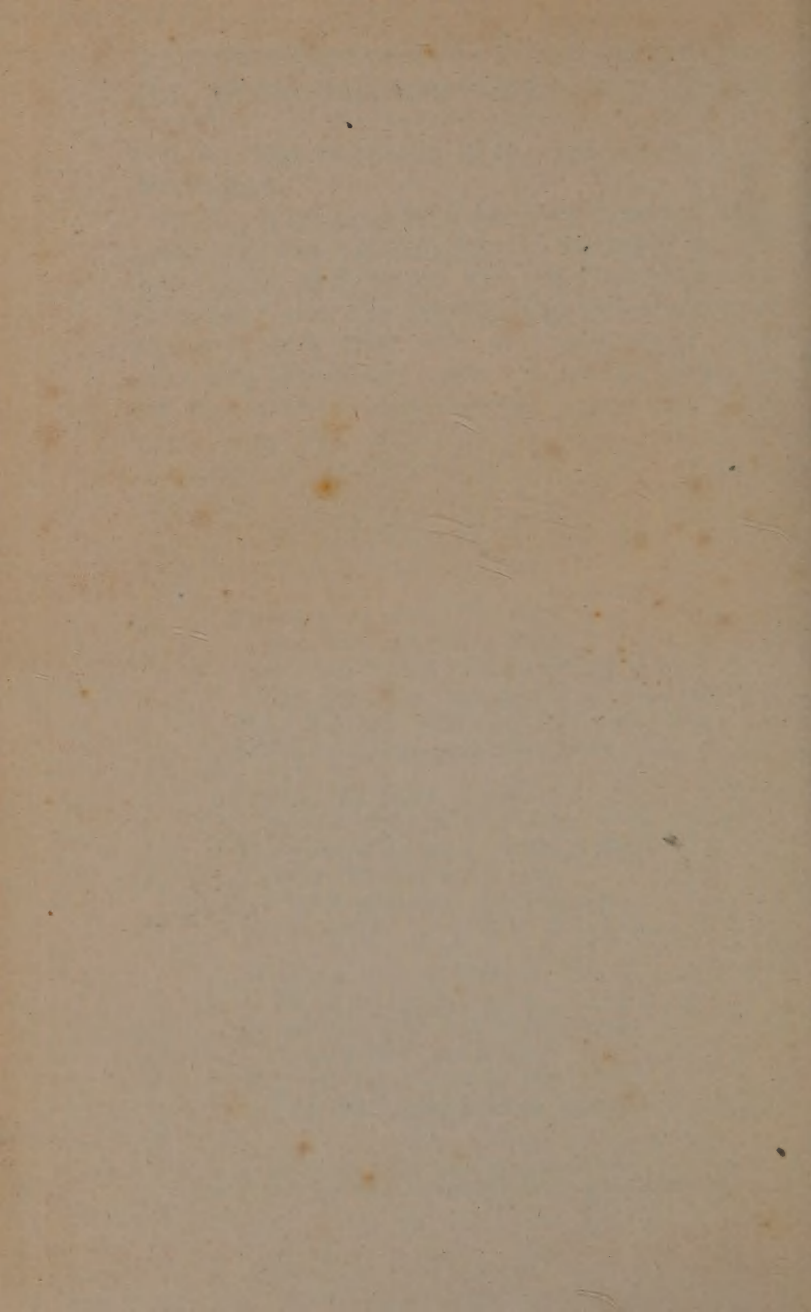
" Friend after friend departs ;  
    Who hath not lost a friend ?  
There is no union here of hearts,  
    That finds not here an end :  
Were this frail world our only rest,  
Living or dying, none were blest.

Beyond the flight of time,  
    Beyond this vale of death,  
There surely is some blessed clime  
    Where life is not a breath,  
Nor life's affections transient fire,  
Whose sparks fly upwards to expire.

Thus star by star declines  
    Till all are passed away,  
As morning high and higher shines  
    To pure and perfect day.  
Nor sink those stars in empty night ;  
    They hide themselves in heaven's own light."







BX Court, Lewis Henry, 1870-  
8277 Some Dartmoor saints and shrines; studies  
D3 experimental religion among the homely folk.  
C6 London, Morgan & Scott [pref. 1927]  
xii, 212p. plates, ports. 20cm.

1. Methodist Church in Dartmoor, Eng.
2. Dartmoor, Eng.--Description and travel.
- I. Title.

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